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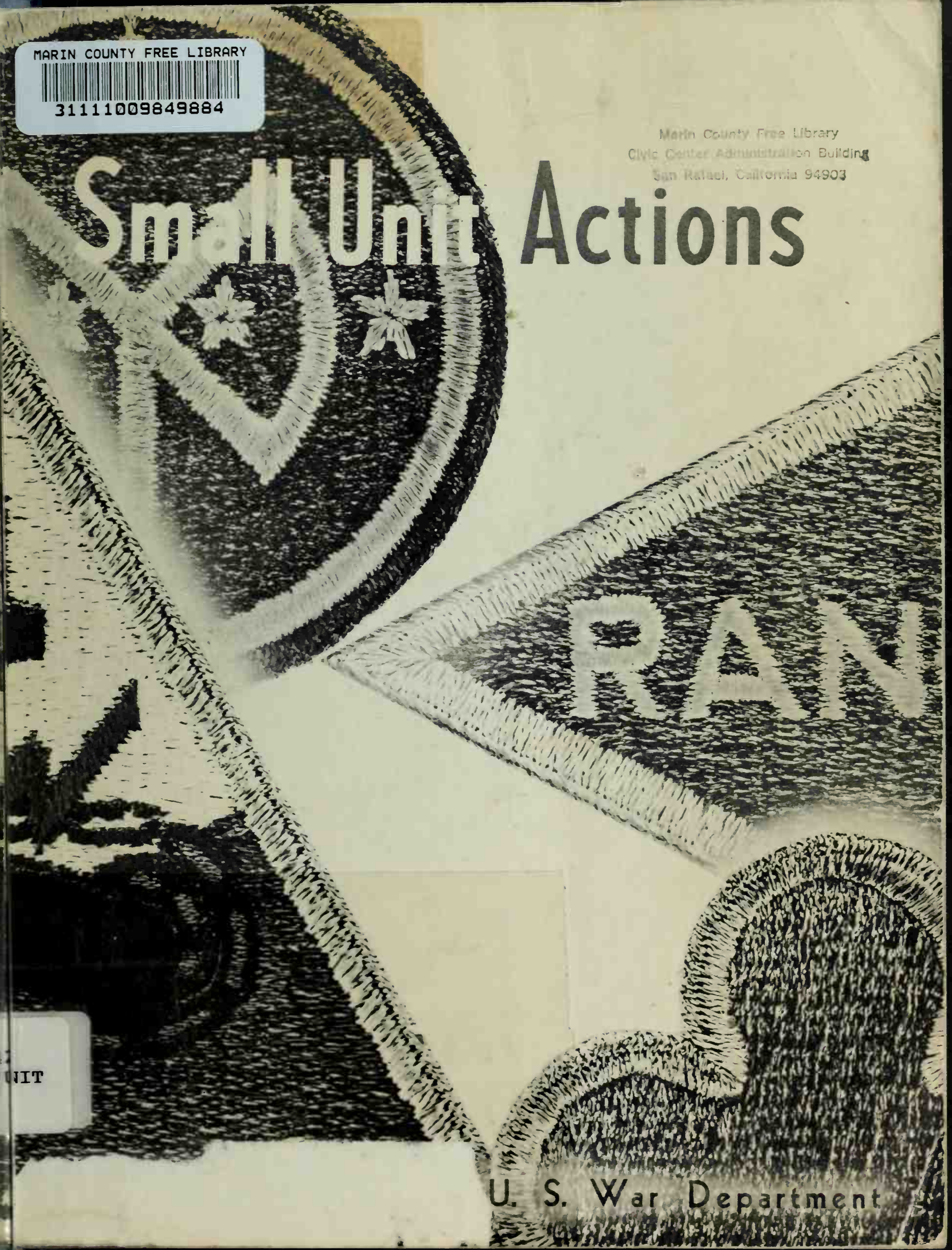
# Small Unit Actions



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# SMALL UNIT ACTIONS

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*st Pointe du Hoe*

*anapag Plain*

*Maria Infante*

*n at Singling*

*Series*

ion

SHINGTON, D.C.

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Washington, DC

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# FOREWORD

*In a nation at war, teamwork by the whole people is necessary for victory. But the issue is decided on the battlefield, toward which all national effort leads. The country's fate lies in the hands of its soldier citizens; in the clash of battle is found the final test of plans, training, equipment, and—above all—the fighting spirit of units and individuals.*

*AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION SERIES presents detailed accounts of particular combat operations of United States forces. To the American public, this record of high achievement by men who served their nation well is presented as a preface to the full military history of World War II. To the soldiers who took part in the operations concerned, these narratives will give the opportunity to see more clearly the results of orders which they obeyed, and of sacrifices which they and their comrades made, in performance of missions that find their meaning in the outcome of a larger plan of battle.*

Dwight D. Eisenhower

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
*Chief of Staff.*

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WAR DEPARTMENT

Historical Division

Washington 25, D. C.

4 April 1946

*Small Unit Actions,* eleventh in the series of monographs on American operations in World War II, marks a departure from earlier numbers in that series. It presents, instead of a coordinated treatment of a larger operation, four detailed narratives dealing with small units which took part in such operations. Each narrative has a unity of its own, but the actions dealt with are separate and distinct, relating to four campaigns in three main theaters of war.

There are several reasons that justify such a publication. The most important is to give both the military reader and the American public solid, uncolored material for a better understanding of the real nature of modern battle. Military operations on the scale of this war if treated, as they must usually be, in terms of armies and corps, can give only an outline account of the fortunes of units smaller than a battalion, and very often the battalion is treated as the smallest counter in the moves described on a battlefield. This tends to be misleading; a battalion has no such unity as a battleship, but is a complex organism that maneuvers ordinarily on a front half a mile or more in width, includes a variety of specialized weapons, and often has attachments of engineers or tanks to provide greater tactical flexibility. In jungle or hedgerow country, the battalion frequently exists only as a mechanism to coordinate, perhaps with the greatest difficulty, the separate engagements of companies, platoons, or even squads. When the record (or the military history) sums up an action by saying, "The 3d Battalion fought its way forward against heavy resistance for 500 yards," only the man who has himself experienced combat is likely to realize what this can involve, and what the phrase conceals. It does not give the story of the front line action as experienced by the combat soldier. That story, hardest of all military operations to recapture and make clear, lies in detail such as that offered by the narratives presented here.

A further reason for such a publication has been recognized in the past by American military leaders, as by others. In training for modern war, particularly in armies largely officered in lower units by men taken from civilian life, there is much need for concrete, case-history material which company and field-grade officers can use to find out what actually happens in battle. Manuals must deal with doctrines and theory; their material is generalized. There has always been need for factual supplement, to show how tactical doctrines, good and bad, actually work under the stress of battle conditions. But military literature has tended to leave this field of research to the novelists, and military records have not in the past been designed to furnish an adequate basis for study of small-unit actions. After the First World War, the American Army endeavored to collect such materials, and found them hard to get and difficult to evaluate. The best were included in a useful and interesting volume, *Infantry in Battle,* prepared under the auspices of The Infantry School, Fort Benning.

From its inception in 1943, the Historical Division, War Department Special Staff, had as one of its aims the securing of sufficient data to support future work of this type. For obtaining this data, as well as information at higher levels and on other phases of operations, the Information and Historical Units, attached to field armies, conducted extensive interviews with personnel of units engaged in typical, unusual, or critical actions. The interviews were accompanied by terrain study of the battlefield, sometimes conducted with members of the units being interviewed. Every effort was made, by careful checking and rechecking, to obtain a full and accurate account—not for the sake of a colorful story, but to have a trustworthy record for

whatever use it afforded. Sometimes (as in the case of two of the actions published here) practically all survivors of participating units were involved in group interviews that might last two or three days for a single group. The scale of the effort is suggested by the fact that some 2,000 indexed interviews have come back to the War Department archives from one theater.

The four narratives given here will serve as samples of the source materials thus obtained, containing in very large measure data which are not to be found in unit records. The latter were used in every case, however, to check and supplement interviews.

The actions chosen for this publication illustrate widely varying tactical problems and methods. Only one (Pointe du Hoe) represents a highly specialized form of action; the others are typical of scores of battles in their respective theaters of operations. All are average in the sense that they are not "success" stories, but cross sections of a war which involved reverses as well as victories. This fact will be obscured in histories of campaigns and major battles, for, in these, U.S. forces were almost uniformly successful. But the larger successes were won by actions like those recorded here; in every phase of the war battalions and companies went through a daily fare of experience that was never uniform, that nearly always included some measure of trial and even defeat as part of the fuller pattern which, over a longer period, added up to victory.

The interviews for, and preparation of, the four narratives should be credited as follows: *Pointe du Hoe,* Historical Section, European Theater of Operations; *The Fight on Tanapag Plain,* 1st Information and Historical Service; *Santa Maria Infante,* 7th Information and Historical Service (Fifth Army); *Singling,* 3d Information and Historical Service (Third Army).

*Small Unit Actions* is based on the best military records available. As far as possible, names and ranks of personnel were checked with records in The Adjutant General's Office. Roster of the enlisted men who participated in the *Santa Maria Infante Operation* and *The Fight on Tanapag Plain* were not accessible. It was impossible to obtain full names of all men mentioned in the operations and to check last names, so it is expected that some errors occur in spelling of names and in grade designations.

Five photographs (pp. 9, 13, 37, 75, 91) are by the U.S. Navy; three (pp. 79, 87, 107) were taken by the U.S. Marine Corps; eleven (pp. 1, 8, 10, 20, 32, 42, 49, 126, 130, 160, 182) are from the U.S. Army Air Forces; three (pp. 92, 105, 109) are by the 1st Information and Historical Service; twelve (pp. 176, 191, 192, 193, 194, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 210) were taken by the 3d Information and Historical Service; four (pp. 116, 123, 142, 212) were taken by the Joint Intelligence Collecting Agency. All others were furnished by the U.S. Army Signal Corps.

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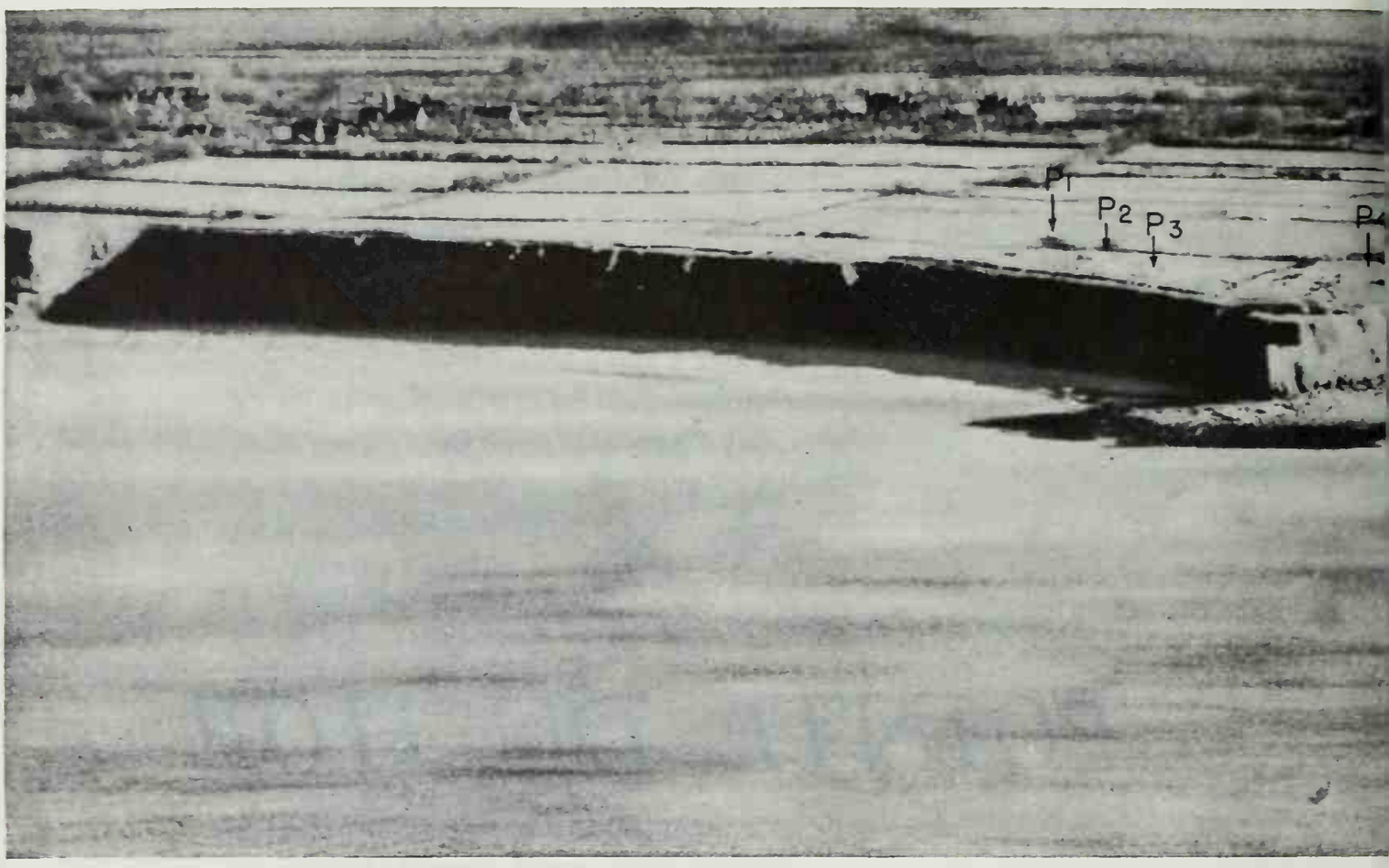
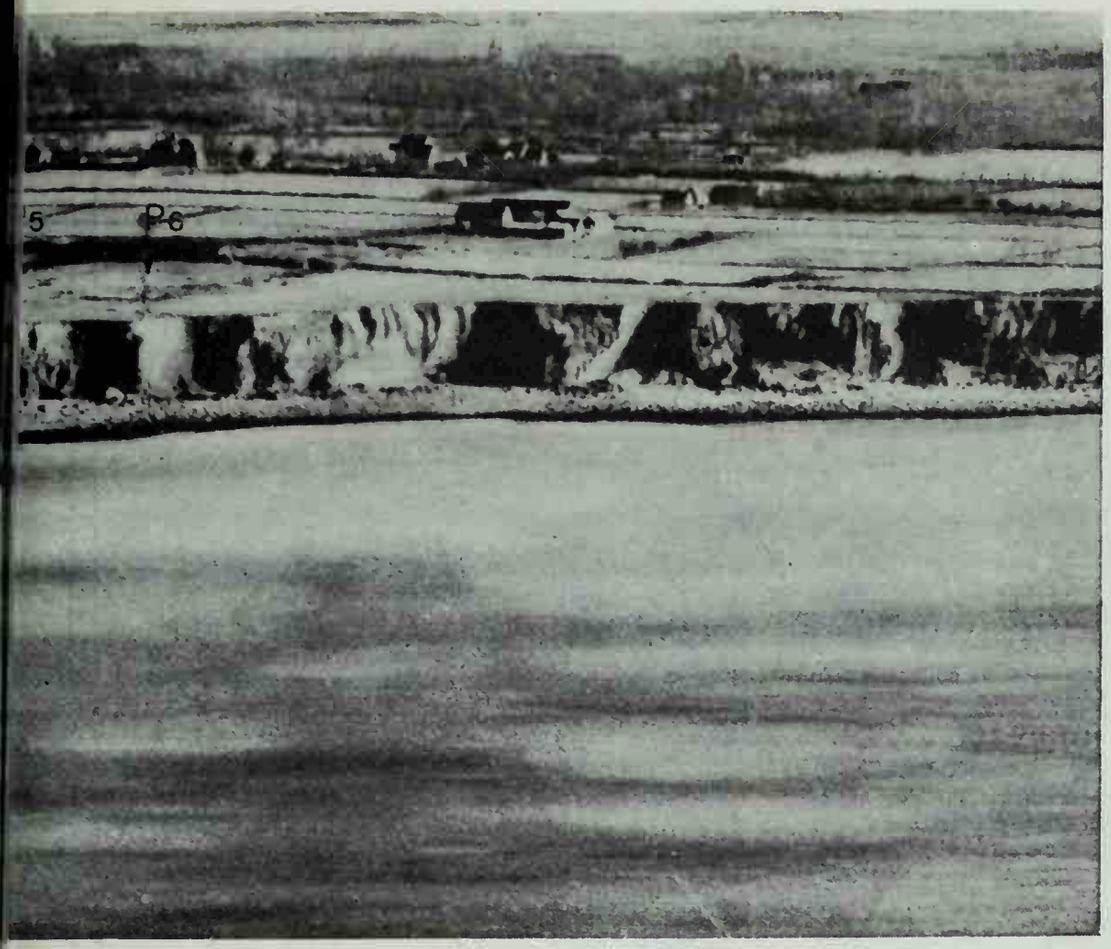
SMALL UNIT ACTIONS

# *POINTE DU HOE*

2d RANGER BATTALION
6 June 1944



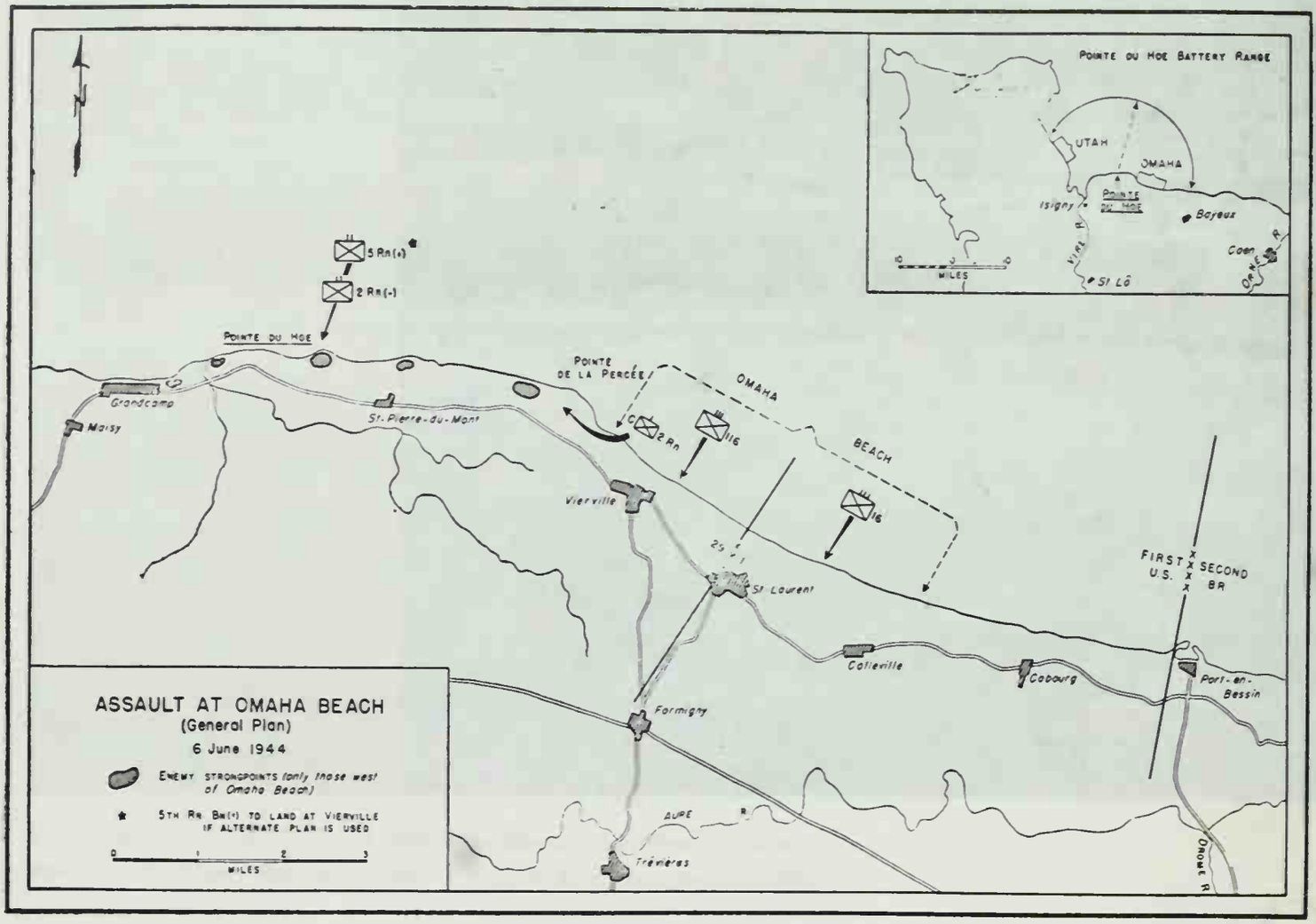

POINTE DU HOE CLIFFS *before bombardment show as almost vertical walls. Composite photo, taken 1943, marks enemy gun positions.*



On 6 June 1944 the V Corps of U.S. First Army assaulted German coastal defenses on a 6,000-yard stretch ("Omaha" Beach) between Vierville and Colleville. Their aim was to establish, on D Day, a beachhead three to four miles deep extending from the Drôme River to the vicinity of Isigny. The attack was made by two divisions, the 1st and 29th, with strong attachments of armor and artillery. On their right flank, a separate mission of unusual difficulty was assigned to a special assault force (Map No. 1, page 2).

At Pointe du Hoe, four miles west of Omaha Beach, the Germans had constructed a fortified position for a coastal battery of six 155-mm howitzers of French make; four guns were in open emplacements and two were casemated, with further construction work on casemates reported under way in April and May. This battery was one of the most dangerous elements in the German coastal defenses of the assault area. With a 25,000-yard range, the 155's could put fire on the approaches to Omaha Beach and on the transport area of V Corps; in addition they could reach the transport area from which VII Corps, to the west, would unload for assault at the base of the Cotentin Peninsula ("Utah" Beach).

The position at Pointe du Hoe was strongly protected from attack by sea. Between Grandcamp and the Omaha sector, the flat Norman tableland terminates abruptly in rocky cliffs. At Pointe du Hoe, these are 85 to 100 feet high, sheer to overhanging; be-




*MAP NO. 1*

low them is a narrow strip of beach, without the slightest cover for assaulting troops. Aerial photographs indicated what was later confirmed by French civilians: that the enemy regarded the position as nearly impregnable from seaward attack and were more concerned with defending it against an enemy coming from inland. The battery was part of a self-contained fortress area, mined and wired on the landward side (Map No. 2, page 6). Its flanks were protected by two supporting smaller positions mounting machine guns and, on the west, an antiaircraft gun. These positions were sited to put enfilade fire on the beaches under the Point, and to aid its defense against any inland attack. Enemy troops at Pointe du Hoe were estimated at 125 infantry and 85 artillerymen, included in the sector of enemy coastal defenses, from the Vire to the Orne, held by the *716th Infantry Division.* This unit contained a high percentage of non-German troops, and was regarded as of limited fighting value. Elements of the *726th Infantry Regiment* held the sector from Vierville to Grandcamp, in which, because of the continuous stretch of cliffs, coastal strongpoints were widely spaced. Those nearest Pointe du Hoe were one mile distant on the west and two miles to the east. The Germans had made no preparations to defend this part of the coast in depth. The *716th Division* was

stretched thinly along 30 miles of shore; behind it, but believed 10 to 12 hours away, the *352d Infantry Division* in the St-Lô–Caumont area was the nearest mobile reserve.

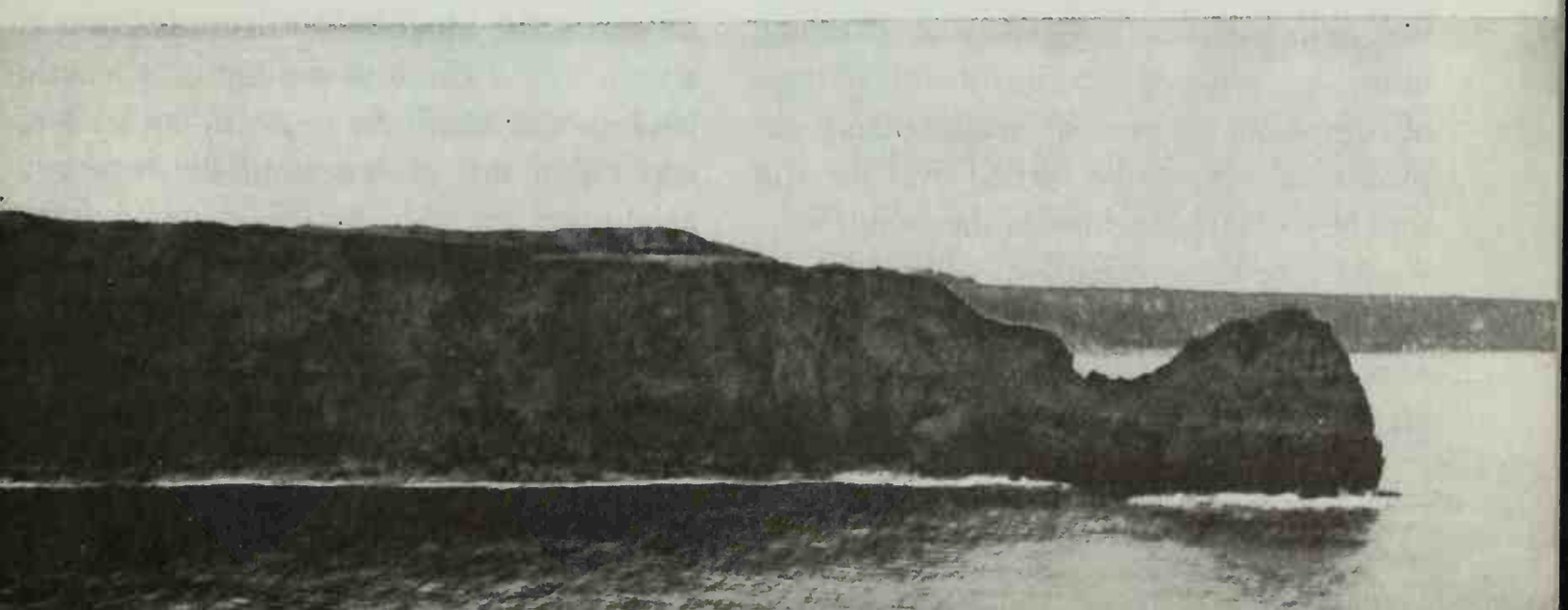
The Ranger Group, attached to the 116th Infantry and commanded by Lt. Col. James E. Rudder, was given the mission of capturing Pointe du Hoe and neutralizing the dangerous German coastal battery. The Group was made up of two battalions: the 2d Rangers, under direct command of Colonel Rudder, and the 5th Rangers, under Lt. Col. Max F. Schneider. Three companies (D, E, and F) of the 2d Battalion were to land from the sea at H Hour and assault the cliff position at Pointe du Hoe. The main Ranger force (5th Battalion and Companies A and B of the 2d) would wait off shore for signal of success, then land at the Point. The Ranger Group would then move inland, cut the coastal highway connecting Grandcamp and Vierville, and await the arrival of the 116th Infantry from Vierville before pushing west toward Grandcamp and Maisy.

An alternate plan was ready if the support force of Rangers had not received word, by H+30, of success in the attack on the cliffs at Pointe du Hoe. In this event, the larger Ranger force would land on the western end of Omaha Beach (Vierville sector) behind the 116th Infantry and proceed overland toward the Point, avoiding all unnecessary action en route to its objective.

Company C, 2d Rangers, had a separate mission of its own at Omaha Beach. It was ordered to land with the first assault wave of the 116th and knock out German strongpoints near Pointe de la Percée, immediately flanking the Omaha landing beaches.

Special attention was given the Pointe du Hoe battery in the preparatory air and naval bombardments. As early as 15 April, medium bombers of the Ninth Air Force had begun attacks to soften up the position and to slow enemy efforts to construct further casemates. In order not to tip off the invasion plans, these early attacks could not be made too often and were combined with wide-ranging missions directed at other points on the French coast from Brittany to Belgium. On 22 May and 4 June, Ninth Air Force bombers struck again, and on the night of

TIP OF POINTE DU HOE. *Photo taken from east side (1945).*



5/6 June RAF heavies included the Point in a major attack on batteries along the whole invasion coast. Naval bombardment of the Omaha sector and its flanks began at 0550 on 6 June; particular attention, especially by the main batteries of the battleship *Texas* (14-inch guns), was paid to Pointe du Hoe in this fire. At H—20 minutes (0610), 18 medium bombers of the Ninth Air Force made a last strike on the Point.

At H Hour, 0630, the three companies of the 2d Rangers, led by Colonel Rudder, were scheduled to touch down at the foot of the cliffs and deliver their assault. They totaled about 225 men,[1] including a headquarters detachment.

### *Assault Plans*

The three companies selected for the mission at Pointe du Hoe had received intensive training and had developed special equipment for the operation. During April and May, at Swanage on the Isle of Wight, the personnel had been conditioned by hard practice in rope and ladder work on cliffs like those of the French coast, combined with landing exercises in difficult waters. Personnel of British Commando units gave all possible help, based on their experience in coastal raids. As a result of experiment with all types of equipment for escalade, main reliance was placed on ropes to be carried over the cliff tops by rockets; in addition, the assault wave would take along extension ladders. British landing craft (LCA's) with British crews were used both in the training and in the actual operation.

[1] The Ranger companies averaged 65 men.

Ten LCA's would be sufficient to boat the three small Ranger companies and headquarters party, including signal and medical personnel, with an average of 21–22 men on a craft. Each LCA was fitted with three pairs of rocket mounts, at bow, amidship, and stern, wired so that they could be fired in series of pairs from one control point at the stern. Plain ¾-inch ropes were carried by one pair of rockets, affixed to the rocket's base by a connecting wire. A second pair was rigged for rope of the same size fitted with toggles, small wooden crossbars a few inches long inserted at about one-foot intervals (see illustration, page 13); the third pair of rockets was attached to light rope ladders with rungs every two feet. The rockets were headed by grapnels. The rope or ladder for each rocket was coiled in a box directly behind the rocket mount. Each craft carried, in addition to the six mounted rockets, a pair of small, hand-projector-type rockets attached to plain ropes. These could be easily carried ashore if necessary.

Extension ladders were of two types. One, carried by each LCA, consisted of 112 feet of tubular-steel, 4-foot sections weighing 4 pounds each; these ladders were partly assembled in advance in 16-foot lengths. For mounting the whole ladder in escalade work, a man would climb to the top of a length, haul up and attach the next 16-foot section, and repeat this process until the necessary height was reached. As a final auxiliary for climbing, four dukws would come in close behind the first wave, each carrying a 100-foot extension ladder, fire-department type, with three folding sections. Two Lewis machine guns were mounted at the top of each

of these ladders, which would be particularly useful for getting up supplies.

Speed was essential for this operation, and the small assault force was equipped for shock action of limited duration, with a minimum load of supplies and weapons. Dressed in fatigue uniform, each Ranger carried a D–bar for rations, two grenades, and his weapon, normally the M–1 rifle. A few of the men selected for going first up the ropes carried pistols or carbines. Heavier weapons were limited to four BAR's and two light mortars per company. Ten thermite grenades, for demolition, were distributed within each company. Two supply boats (LCA's) would come in a few minutes after the assault wave, with packs, extra rations and ammunition, two 81-mm mortars, demolitions, and equipment for hauling supplies up the cliff.

The tactical plan provided for Companies E and F to assault on the east side of the Point, and Company D on the west (Map No. 2, page 6). On reaching the cliff top, each boat team had a series of specific objectives, beginning with the gun emplacements and other fortifications on the Point. With these first objectives taken, most of the force was to push out immediately to the south, reach the coastal highway which was a main communications lateral for German defenses of the Grandcamp–Vierville coast, and hold a position controlling that road to the west until the arrival of the 116th Infantry from Vierville. If the assault at Omaha went according to schedule, the 116th would be at Pointe du Hoe before noon. Long before then, the main body of Rangers (eight companies) should have followed in at the Point to strengthen the foothold won by the initial assault.

As a final feature of the plans, fire support after the landing would be available on call from supporting naval craft and from artillery landing after 0800 near Vierville. A Naval Shore Fire Control Party (12 men) and a forward observer of the 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalion were attached to Colonel Rudder's headquarters, which was distributed among the four LCA's carrying Company E.

### *The Landing*

D-Day weather was unfavorable for a landing assault, with rough seas that imperiled small landing craft during their approach to the beaches. Early visibility along the coast was poor, and an eastward-setting tidal current helped to produce errors in navigation. The results, on the Omaha Beach sectors, were delays in reaching shore and enough mislanding of assault craft to interfere seriously with the early schedule for the attack. The Ranger force did not escape these difficulties.

Shortly after leaving their transports (the LSI's *Ben Machree* and *Amsterdam*), the craft began to suffer from the results of the heavy going.[1] Eight miles from shore LCA 860, carrying Capt. Harold K. Slater and 20 men of Company D, swamped in the 4-foot choppy waves. The personnel were picked up by rescue craft and carried to England, eventually to rejoin their unit on

[1] The LCA's had been designed with shallow draft and for relatively slow speeds; under D-Day conditions they proved less seaworthy than the LCVP's, although their draft permitted them to make drier landing.

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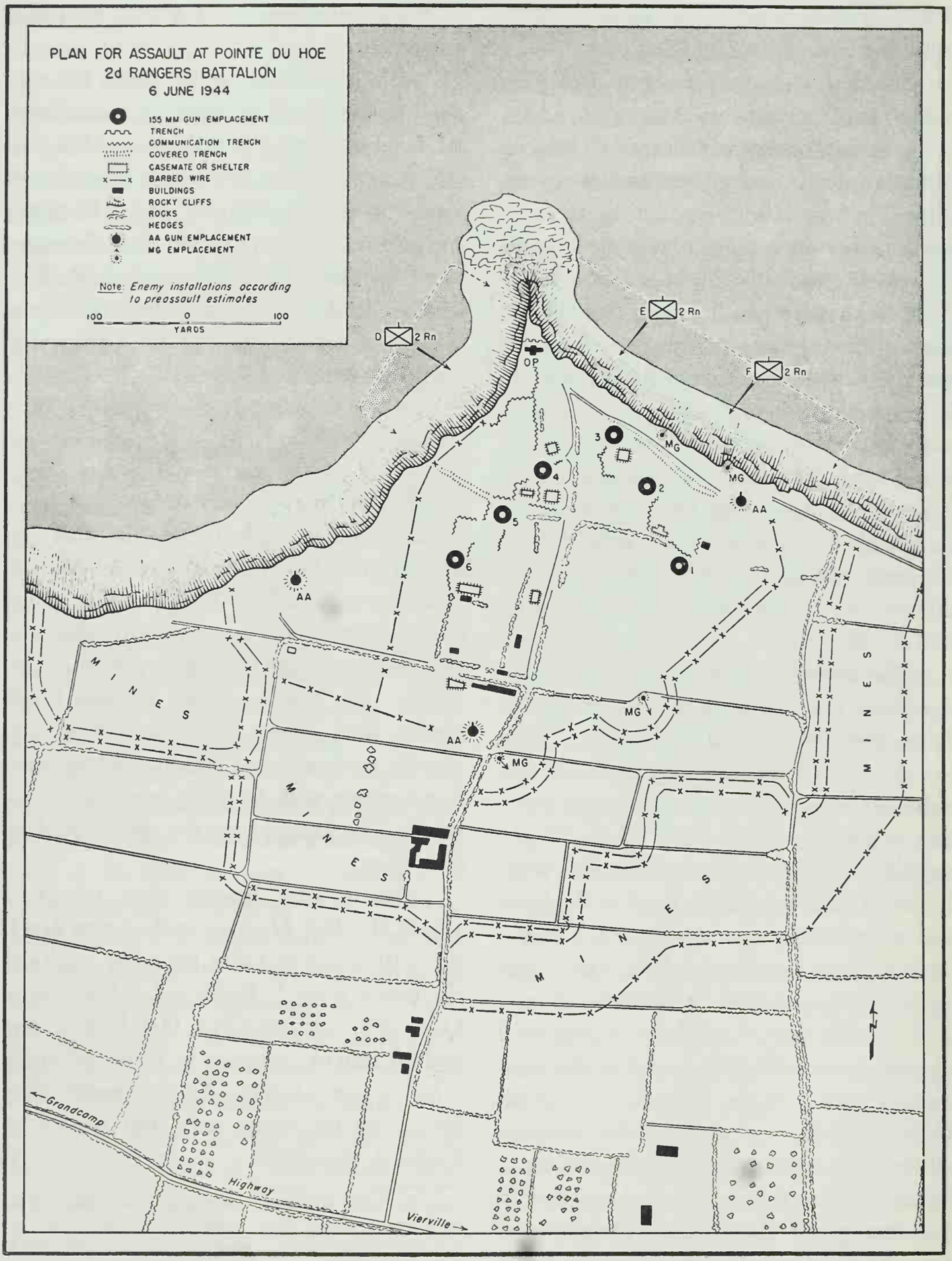

PLAN FOR ASSAULT AT POINTE DU HOE
2d RANGERS BATTALION
6 JUNE 1944
155 MM GUN EMPLACEMENT
TRENCH
COMMUNICATION TRENCH
COVERED TRENCH
CASEMATE OR SHELTER
BARBED WIRE
BUILDINGS
ROCKY CLIFFS
ROCKS
HEDGES
AA GUN EMPLACEMENT
MG EMPLACEMENT
Note: Enemy installations according to preassault estimates
100 0 100
YARDS
D 2 Rn
E 2 Rn
F 2 Rn
OP
MG
AA
MINES
Grandcamp
Highway
Vierville

*MAP NO. 2*

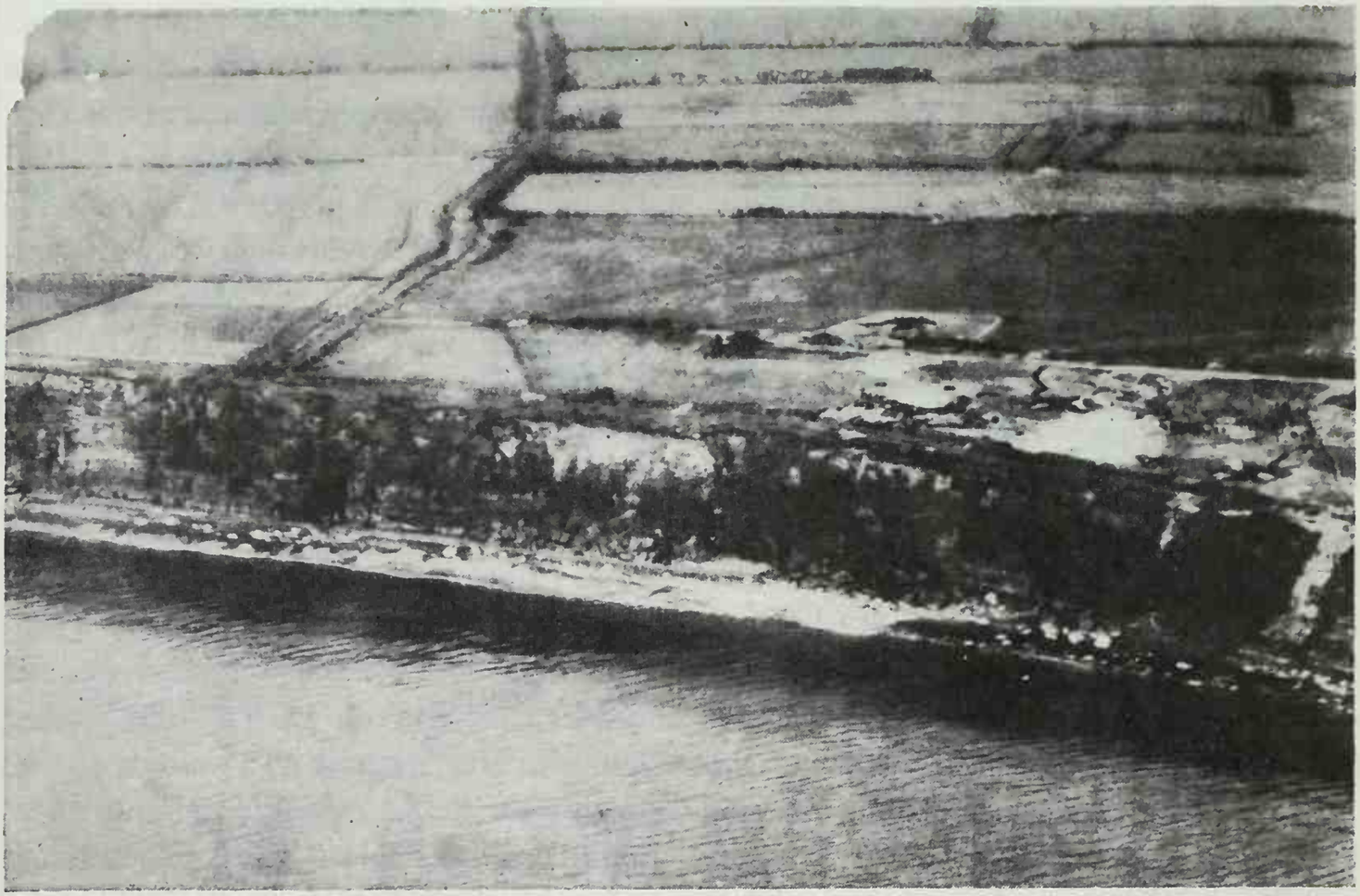
D+19. Ten minutes later one of the supply craft sank, with only one survivor. The other supply craft was soon in trouble and had to jettison all the packs of Companies D and E in order to stay afloat. The other craft survived, with varying degrees of trouble; several shipped so much water that the men had to bail with their helmets to help the pumps. From the start, all the Rangers were soaked with spray. In one respect they enjoyed exceptional luck: there were very few cases of seasickness, in contrast to the general record at Omaha. Despite being wet, cold, and cramped by the three-hour trip, personnel of the three Ranger companies reached the shore in good shape for immediate and strenuous action. The most serious effect of the wetting was to soak the climbing ropes and rope ladders, making them heavier.

The leading group of nine surviving LCA's kept good formation, in a double column ready to fan out as they neared shore. Unfortunately, the guide craft lost its bearings as the coast line came in sight, and headed straight for Pointe de la Percée, three miles east of the target. When Colonel Rudder, in the lead LCA, realized the error he intervened and turned the column westward. But the damage had been done. The mistake cost more than 30 minutes in reaching Pointe du Hoe; instead of landing at H Hour, the first Ranger craft touched down about H+38, a delay that determined the whole course of action at the Point for the next two days. The main Ranger flotilla, eight companies strong, was following in from the transports, watching anxiously for the signal of success at Pointe du Hoe (two successive flares shot by 60-mm mortars). By 0700, if no message or signal had come, Colonel Schneider's force was scheduled to adopt the alternate plan of action and land at the Vierville beach. They waited ten minutes beyond the time limit and then received by radio the code word TILT, prearranged signal to follow the alternative plan. So Colonel Schneider turned in toward Vierville, where the 5th Rangers and A and B of the 2d landed at 0745. Pending the outcome at Omaha Beach, and the success of Colonel Schneider's force in fighting cross country to the Point, Colonel Rudder's three companies would fight alone.

The error in direction had further consequences. The correction headed Colonel Rudder's column of LCA's back toward Pointe du Hoe, but now on a westerly course, roughly paralleling the cliffs and only a few hundred yards offshore. The flotilla thus had to run the gauntlet of fire from German strongpoints along three miles of coast. Fortunately these were few, and their fire was wild and intermittent. The only serious casualty was a dukw, hit by 20-mm fire as it neared the target area. Five of the nine men aboard were killed or wounded.

The plan for landings had to be changed as a result of the misdirected approach. Since the column of LCA's was now coming at the Point from east instead of north, Company D's craft would not be able to swing out of column and reach the west side of the promontory in time to assault with the other units. Therefore, to effect synchronized attack, the nine assault craft deployed and came in on line together at the east side (Map No. 3).

A final result of the delay was apparent as they reached the goal. Naval fire had halted just before H Hour, and the enemy on



WESTERN HALF OF FORTIFIED AREA, *photographed in February 1943 by aerial reconnaissance. The farm lane inland is the route followed by Company F group to reach the highway on D Day.*

Pointe du Hoe had 40 minutes to recover from the effects of the bombardment. As the LCA's neared the Point, they received scattered small-arms and automatic fire, and enemy troops were observed moving near the edge of the cliff. There was, however, no indication of artillery in action from the enemy positions.

At 0710, as the first craft were grounding under the cliffs, radio silence was broken to send Colonel Schneider the order for landing at Vierville. The message was acknowledged.

The small assault force was not entirely alone as it came in to a hostile shore. The British destroyer *Talybont,* which had taken part in the early bombardment of Pointe du Hoe at range of 2.7 miles, saw the flotilla heading in on a wrong course, and found it difficult to understand, "as Texas' fall of shot on Pointe du Hoe was obvious." As the Rangers corrected course and came under fire from the cliff positions, the *Talybont* closed range and for 15 minutes (0645–0700) raked enemy firing positions with 4-inch and 2-pounder shells. Meantime, the U.S. destroyer *Satterlee,* 2,500 yards from Pointe du Hoe, could see enemy troops assembling on the cliff, and opened with main battery and machine-gun fire.

### *The Cliff Assault*

The nine LCA's touched down on a front of about 500 yards, the right-hand craft just under the tip of Pointe du Hoe, and the others spaced fairly evenly. No great distance separated some of the boat teams, but according to plan they went into action as separate units, each facing its particular problems of escalade and opposition.

In certain general respects, their problems were similar. The 30-yard strip of beach between water and cliff had been completely cratered by bombs. The craters were to handicap the unloading of men and supplies and were to render the dukws useless after landing, for these craft were nowhere able to cross the sand and get close enough to the cliff to reach it with their extension ladders. The cliff face showed extensive marks of the naval and air bombardment; huge chunks of the top had been torn out, forming

BOMB AND SHELL HOLES *in the narrow strip of rocky beach, at the foot of the cliffs, slowed the Rangers in getting to the shelter of the cliffs after landing. This photo, taken on D + 1, shows a boat bringing in first supplies for the beleaguered Rangers.*

talus mounds at the base. A few grenades were thrown down or rolled over the edge as the first Rangers crossed the sand, and enemy small-arms fire came from scattered points along the cliff edge. Particularly dangerous was enfilade fire, including automatic weapons, from the German position on the left flank of the beach. Once at the foot of the cliff the Rangers were better off, for the piles of debris gave partial defilade from the flanking fires, and the enemy directly above would have to expose themselves in order to place observed fire or to aim their grenades.

Naval support came to the aid of the Rangers at this critical moment. The destroyer *Satterlee* watched the craft reach

*MAP NO. 3—The Assault Landings at Pointe du Hoe*

shore, and saw the enemy firing from the cliff above. The *Satterlee* immediately took the cliff tops under fire from its 5-inch guns and 40-mm machine guns. Fire control was excellent, despite attempts of enemy machine guns and a heavier gun to counter the destroyer's effort. Comdr. J. W. Marshall, commanding the *Satterlee,* believed this fire was decisive in enabling the Rangers to get up the cliff. However, his impression that the assault force "was pinned under the cliff and being rapidly cut to pieces by enemy fire" is not confirmed by the speed with which the escalade got under way, or by other details of the landing. Curiously enough, only three or four men out of 120 survivors interviewed remembered noticing naval fire after touchdown. One of these was Colonel Rudder, who "had the living hell scared out of him" by explosions which brought down a section of cliff just over his head, and which came from an unknown source. Both impressions —the Rangers', that there was no fire support worth mentioning, and the *Satterlee's,* that the Rangers were pinned down—are easily understandable under the circumstances of battle and the difficulties of observation. The probability is that the destroyer's fire on the cliff top, at the moment when the Rangers were starting their assault, did a great deal to prevent effective enemy opposition at the decisive moment.

In any event, the assault went forward without check. Ranger casualties on the beach totaled about 15, most of them from the raking fire to their left. In something less than ten minutes from landing, the first Ranger parties were getting over the cratered edges of the cliff top. The story of the boat teams will be given in order from right to left, roughly the order of landing.

· *LCA 861.* Carrying a boat team of Company E, commanded by 1st Lt. Theodore E. Lapres, Jr., this craft grounded about 25 yards from the bottom of the cliff. Three or four Germans were standing on the cliff edge, shooting down at the craft. Rangers near the stern took these enemy under fire and drove them out of sight. At the instant of touchdown the rear pair of rockets was fired, then the other two pairs in succession. All the ropes fell short of the cliff edge, as a result of being thoroughly soaked. In some cases not more than half the length of rope or ladder was lifted from the containing box.

As the Rangers crossed the strip of cratered sand, grenades were thrown down from above them, or rolled over the cliff edge. These were of the "potato-masher" type, with heavy concussion effects but small fragmentation. They caused two casualties. The hand-rockets were carried ashore, and the first one was fired at 15 yards from the cliff. It went over the top and caught. Pfc. Harry W. Roberts started up the hand-line, bracing his feet against the 80-degree slope. He made about 25 feet; the rope slipped or was cut, and Roberts slithered down. The second rocket was fired and the grapnel caught. Roberts went up again, made the top (he estimated his climbing time at 40 seconds), and pulled into a small cratered niche just under the edge. As he arrived, the rope was cut. Roberts tied it to a picket. This pulled out under the weight of the next man, and the rope fell off the cliff, marooning Roberts. However, a 20-foot mound of clay knocked

off the cliff enabled Roberts' team to get far enough up the side to throw him a rope. This time he lay across it, and five men, including Lieutenant Lapres, came up. Roberts had not yet seen an enemy and had not been under fire. Without waiting for further arrivals, the six Rangers started for their objective, the heavily constructed OP at the north tip of the fortified area. About ten minutes had elapsed since touchdown.

Just after Lapres' group got up, a heavy explosion occurred above the rest of 861's team, waiting their turn on the rope. Pfc. Paul L. Medeiros was half buried under debris from the cliff. None of the men knew what caused the explosion, whether a naval shell, or the detonation of a German mine of a peculiar type found later at one or two places along the cliff edge. The enemy had hung naval shells (200-mm or larger) over the edge, attached by wire to a pull-type firing device and fitted with a short-delay time fuze.[1] The explosion had no effect on the escalade. Medeiros and four more Rangers came up quickly, found Roberts' party already gone and out of sight, and followed from the cliff edge toward the same objective.[2]

*LCA 862.* This craft, carrying 15 Rangers and NSFC personnel, landed about 100 yards left of the flank LCA. The men had no trouble in disembarking, but once on the sand they found themselves exposed to machine-gun fire from eastward of the landing area. One man was killed and one wounded by this fire; two more injured by grenade fragments.

The forward pair of rockets had been fired immediately on touchdown, followed by all four others together. One plain and two toggle ropes reached the top, but one toggle rope pulled out. Tech. 5 Victor J. Aguzzi, 1st Lt. Joseph E. Leagans (commanding the team), and S/Sgt. Joseph J. Cleaves went up the two remaining ropes, arrived at the top almost together, and fell into a convenient shell hole just beyond the edge. There they paused only long enough for two more men to join; then, following standard Ranger tactics, the five moved off without waiting for the rest of the team, who came up a few minutes later.

*LCA 888.* Colonel Rudder's craft, first to hit the beach, had 15 men of Company E and 6 headquarters personnel, including Lt. J. W. Eikner, communications officer. A few enemy troops were seen on the cliff edge as the LCA neared shore, but, when Sgt. Dominick B. Boggetto shot one German off the edge with a BAR, the others disappeared. The Rangers had trouble in getting through

[1] If, as French civilians later reported, many such shells had been hung, they were probably neutralized by naval fire. No other Ranger party saw them. They may have been planned for dropping to the beach rather than for explosion at the cliff edge.

[2] The photograph on page 13, taken a year later, shows the cliff at the point where 861's men climbed. Two ropes, one of them a ladder type, are still in place. This suggests that later climbers brought up a rope ladder to supplement the first rope, but the point cannot be settled by available evidence.

LAST LAP OF THE CLIMB. *This may be the area where the men from LCA 888 managed to get up by use of an extension ladder, placed on a great mound of debris knocked out of cliff top. This photo was probably taken on D + 2, when route was being used for supplies. A toggle rope and two plain ropes are seen below ladder.*

the beach craters; neck deep in water, they found it hard to climb out because of the slick clay bottom. A few grenades came over the cliff without causing casualties.

The rockets were fired in series, at 35 yards from the cliff base. None of the waterlogged ropes reached the top. When two Rangers, best of the group at free-climbing, tried to work up the smashed cliff face without ropes, they were balked by the slippery clay surface, which gave way too easily to permit knife-holds. Bombs or shells had brought down a mass of wet clay from the cliff top, forming a mound 35 to 40 feet high against the cliff. A 16-foot section of the extension ladder, with a toggle rope attached, was carried to the top of the mound and set up. A Ranger climbed the ladder, cut a foothold in the cliff, and stood in this to hold the ladder while a second man climbed it for another 16 feet. The top man repeated the process, and this time Tech. 5 George J. Putzek reached the edge. Lying flat, with the ladder on his arms, he held on while a man below climbed the toggle rope, then the ladder.

From there on it was easy. As the first men up moved a few yards from the cliff edge to protect the climbers, they found plenty of cover in bomb craters, and no sign of an enemy. In 15 minutes from landing, all the Company E men from LCA 888 were up and ready to move on. Colonel Rudder and headquarters personnel remained for the moment below, finding shelter from enfilade fire in a shallow cave at the bottom of the cliff. By 0725, 1st Lt. James W. Eikner had his equipment set up and flashed word by SCR 300 that Colonel Rudder's force had landed. Five minutes later he sent out the code word indicating "men up the cliff"; the "Roger" that receipted for this message, again on SCR 300, was Eikner's last communication of D Day on the Ranger command net. When he sent the message PRAISE THE LORD ("all men up cliff") at 0745, no response was forthcoming.

*LCA 722.* Twenty yards left of Colonel Rudder's craft, LCA 722 hit shore with 15 Company E Rangers, 5 headquarters men, a *Stars and Stripes* photographer, and a Commando officer who had assisted the Rangers in training. Touchdown was made at the edge of a crater, and the men could not avoid it in debarking. Enemy grenades were ineffectual, and the craters and debris on the beach gave sufficient cover from enfilading fire from the left. The only casualty was Pfc. John J. Sillman, wounded three times as the craft came in, hit twice on the beach, and destined to survive. A good deal of assorted equipment came on this craft, including the SCR 284, two pigeons, a 60-mm mortar with ammunition, and some demolitions. All were got ashore without loss, though it took maneuvering to avoid the deep water in the crater. Tech. 4 C. S. Parker and two other communications men hefted the big radio set on a pack board, and managed to get it in and working before the first climbers from 722 reached the top.

The rockets had been fired just before landing. One ladder and one plain rope got up and held (LCA 722 had experienced no trouble with water, and the ropes were comparatively dry). The single rope lay in a slight crevice, but the ladder came down on

an overhang where it seemed exposed to the flanking fire and would be hard to climb. Tech. 5 Edward P. Smith tried the plain rope and found he could easily "walk it up." On top three or four minutes after landing, he saw a group of Germans to his right throwing grenades over the cliff. Sgt. Hayward A. Robey joined Smith with a BAR. Robey lay in a shallow niche at the cliff edge and sprayed the grenadiers with 40 or 50 rounds, fast fire. Three of the enemy dropped and the rest disappeared into shelters. Pfc. Frank H. Peterson, lightly wounded on the beach by a grenade, joined up and the three Rangers went off on their mission without waiting for the next climbers.

The mortar section in this boat team remained below, according to plan, with the purpose of setting up their 60-mm on the beach to deliver supporting fires. But the beach was too exposed to make this practicable, and time was consumed in getting ammunition from the one surviving supply craft. About 0745 the mortar team went on top without having yet fired.

*LCA 668.* Company D's craft had been scheduled to land on the west side of the Point. As a result of the change in angle of approach, the two surviving LCA's came in to the left of Company E, and in the center of the Ranger line.

LCA 668 grounded short of the beach strip, as a result of boulders knocked from the cliff by bombardment. The men had to swim in about 20 feet. While 1st Sgt. Leonard G. Lomell was bringing in a box of rope and a hand-projector rocket, he was wounded in the side by a machine-gun bullet but reached shore and kept going. Despite the unusual distance from the cliff, and the very wet ropes, three rockets had carried the cliff edge with a toggle rope and the two rope ladders. However, the grapnels on the ladders just made the top; since the lead rope connecting grapnels with the top of the ladders was 40 feet long, the Rangers had, in effect, two plain ropes and a toggle. Sergeant Lomell put his best climber on the toggle while he tried one of the ladders. All ropes were on an overhang, and only the toggle line proved practicable. Even on it, climbing would be slow, so Lomell called for the extension ladders. Picking a spot high on the talus, his men found that one 16-foot section added to a 20-foot section reached the top of the vertical stretch, beyond which a slide of debris had reduced the slope enough to make it negotiable without ropes. Two men had got up by the toggle rope; the rest used the ladder and made the top quickly. Grenades caused some annoyance until the first men up could cover the rest of the party. Twelve men moved off from the edge with Sergeant Lomell and 1st Lt. George F. Kerchner.

*LCA 858.* Shipping enough water all the way in to keep the Rangers busy, this craft nevertheless kept up fairly well and was only a minute or two behind the others at the beach. The men were put out into a crater and went over their heads in muddy water. Despite the wetting, a bazooka was the only piece of equipment put out of action. Three men were hit by machine-gun fire from the east flank.

The rockets were fired in series, the plain ropes first. All the ropes were wet, and

only one hand-line got over the cliff. It lay in a crevice that would give some protection from enemy flanking fire, but the direct approach to the foot of the rope was exposed. The Company D Rangers worked their way to the rope through the piles of debris at the cliff base. While one man helped the wounded get to Colonel Rudder's CP, where the medics had set up, all the party went up this one rope and found it not too hard going. They could get footholds in the cliff face, and a big crater reduced the steepness of the climb near the top. The group was up within 15 minutes. As in most other cases, the first few men on top had moved off together, and the boat team did not operate as a unit after the escalade.

*LCA 887.* As a result of Company D's unscheduled landing in the center of the line of craft, the three LCA's carrying Company F were crowded eastward, all of them touching down beyond the area originally assigned them. Few of the Rangers realized this at the time.

LCA 887 had not been much bothered by either water or enemy action on the trip in. The craft grounded five yards out from dry beach, and the shorter men got a ducking in the inevitable crater. No equipment trouble resulted; even Sgt. William L. Petty's BAR, wet here and muddied later when he slipped on the cliff, fired perfectly when first needed. Some enemy fire, including automatic weapons, came from either flank. Two Rangers were wounded.

Just before hitting the beach the two forward rockets were fired. Only one of the plain lines carried, and 1st Lt. Robert C. Arman, commanding the team, figured the heavier ropes had no chance. So, all four of the mounted rockets, together with the boxes carrying toggle ropes and ladders, were taken out on the sand—a matter of ten minutes' heavy work, while the coxswain of the LCA did a notable job of holding the craft in at the beach edge. When the rockets were set up for firing, the lead wire for making the firing connection was missing. Tech/Sgt. John I. Cripps fired all four in turn by touching the short connection, three feet from the rocket base, with his "hot-box." Each time, the flashback blinded Cripps and blew sand and mud all over him. The other Rangers saw him clean his eyes, shake his head, and go after the next rocket: "he was the hell-of-a-looking mess." But all the ropes went up, and made it possible for the party to make the top. Sergeant Petty and some other expert climbers had already tried the plain rope and failed; it was on a straight fall, requiring hand-over-hand work with no footholds possible, and the men had trouble with their muddy hands and clothes on the wet rope.

Sergeant Petty started up one of the ladders, got 30 feet up, and then slid all the way back on the cliff face when the grapnel pulled out. Tech. 5 Carl Winsch was going up the other ladder when fire from somewhere on the flanks began to chip the cliff all around him. Petty went up after Winsch, and found him, unwounded, in a shell hole at the top. Here Petty waited for two more Rangers and then they set out for their objective.

*LCA 884.* This craft, the target for considerable enemy fire from cliff positions on the way to the Point, had replied with its

Lewis guns and the BAR's of the Rangers. Touchdown was made on the edge of a shell hole, in water shoulder-high. Three Rangers were hit by fire coming from the left flank. When rockets were fired in series, front to rear, four got over the cliff, but every rope lay in such position as to be fully exposed to the continuing enemy small-arms fire. Moreover, the Rangers were so muddied in getting through the craters on the beach that the plain ropes would have been unusable after the first climber went up. The only rope ladder that reached the top was caught below on beach boulders and hung at an awkward angle. Several men tried the other ropes without success, and Pvt. William E. Anderson got only part way up in his attempt at free-climbing. 1st Lt. Jacob J. Hill finally took the group over to the left, where they used the ladders of 883's boat team.

*LCA 883.* Last in the column of approach, this craft was last to reach shore, nearly 300 yards left of its planned position and considerably beyond the edge of the main fortified area on Pointe du Hoe. Just to their left, a jut in the cliff protected the boat team from the flanking fire that caused so much trouble for the other landing parties. They made a dry landing, and had a perfect score with the six rockets. This gave an opportunity to use the climbing assignments on a full schedule, using every rope. Nevertheless the going was hard, even on the ladders. 1st Lt. Richard A. Wintz, on a plain rope, found it impossible to get any footholds on the slippery cliff. The wet and muddy rope made it difficult for hand-over-hand pulling, and at the top Wintz was "never so tired in his life." He found six men together and started them out immediately.

CRATERED GROUND *hampered the Rangers in moving cross country through the fortified area, and made it difficult to spot enemy snipers. This photo, looking inland, was probably taken on D + 1.*

WRECKED EMPLACEMENTS *on the Point. Photo taken June 1944.*

*Summary.* The first great difficulty, landing and getting up the cliff, had been surmounted. Enemy resistance, despite the delayed landing, had been weak and ineffective except for the enfilade fire from the machine-gun position just east of Pointe du Hoe. The equipment and training for escalade had met the test. On only two craft had the mounted rockets failed to get at least one rope over the cliff top. The hand-projectors and extension ladders had been useful as supplementary equipment where the ropes failed, and only one boat team found it necessary to use the ropes of another party. The three dukws, stopped at the water's edge by craters, could not bring their mechanically operated extension ladders into play. One of them made the trial, only to have the ladder rest on the cliff side at a considerable angle, short of the top and unbalanced by the motion of the surf.

The assault met unforeseen circumstances, but their effects were not always to the disadvantage of the enterprise. Craters in the beach had made the landings slower and wetter than expected, had neutralized the dukws, and had impeded unloading of ammunition and supplies; on the other hand, they gave some cover from enemy fire. Damage done to the cliff face by bombardment seems, on the whole, to have helped the escalade work, for the piles of debris not only gave cover from the enfilade fire but reduced the height of the climb, particularly for use of extension ladders. The top of the cliff was much cut back by craters, further reducing the areas of sheer slope and providing cover for the first arrivals at the top.

The climbing parties had gone ahead with speed, determination, and resourcefulness, ready to improvise when necessary.

This was the main reason for their success, and for the fact that within 30 minutes from touchdown all the attacking force was on top except for casualties, headquarters personnel, and some mortar men (30 to 40 Rangers out of about 190).

### *Capture of the Point*

Troops landing at Omaha Beach on D Day have frequently registered, in records and interviews, their disappointment at finding little visible evidence of the preliminary bombardment, which was expected to "make the beach a shambles." No such complaint could be made by the 2d Rangers at Pointe du Hoe. As they came up from the ropes they found themselves in a bewildering wasteland of ground literally torn to pieces by bombs and heavy naval shells. Expected landmarks were gone; craters and mounds of wreckage were everywhere, obscuring remnants of paths and trenches. The Rangers had studied these few acres for months, using excellent photographs and large-scale maps that showed every slight feature of terrain and fortifications. Now, they found themselves in danger of losing their way as soon as they made a few steps from the ragged cliff edge into the chaos of holes and debris. Obtaining cover was no problem, but maintaining contact within groups as large as a squad would be almost impossible during movement.

WRECKAGE ON THE POINT *caused by bombs and naval gun shells. Photo taken February 1945, looking inland toward casemates*

OR
4
5
6
2
AA
AA
F Co Group
D Co Gp
E Co Gp
Hill and Anderso
Group
Assembly
area
Roadblock
(0815)
Au Guay
0
100
200
YARDS

There were other causes for the "confused" nature of the action that took place on the Point, characterized as it was by infiltration of many and separate groups of Rangers through all parts of the enemy defenses. The prearranged tactics of the Ranger force emphasized movement with the greatest speed and by small groups. As the first few men on a rope reached the top at any point, they moved off at once for their objectives, without waiting for the rest of their boat group, and without taking time to form an organized section or platoon, or attempting to make contact with neighboring parties. In the climbing phase, so intent were the men on their own work that only in exceptional cases was any Ranger party aware of what other boat groups were doing, or even that other boat teams were on the beach. As the later climbers gained the cliff top, they too went off in small groups; over a period of 15 to 30 minutes a series of these parties was forming at the cliff edge and fanning out in all directions. At least 20 of them could be distinguished, but it is as impossible to trace their movements in exact order or timing as it must have been difficult for the Germans to spot the lines of the attack and organize to meet it.

Yet in essence the attack followed a definite plan and order. As first objectives, each platoon (whatever number of groups it split into) had a limited part of the enemy defensive system to reach and deal with. Every man knew what this mission was, and where to go. The outcome was an action without clear pattern in detail, but with very clearly defined results.

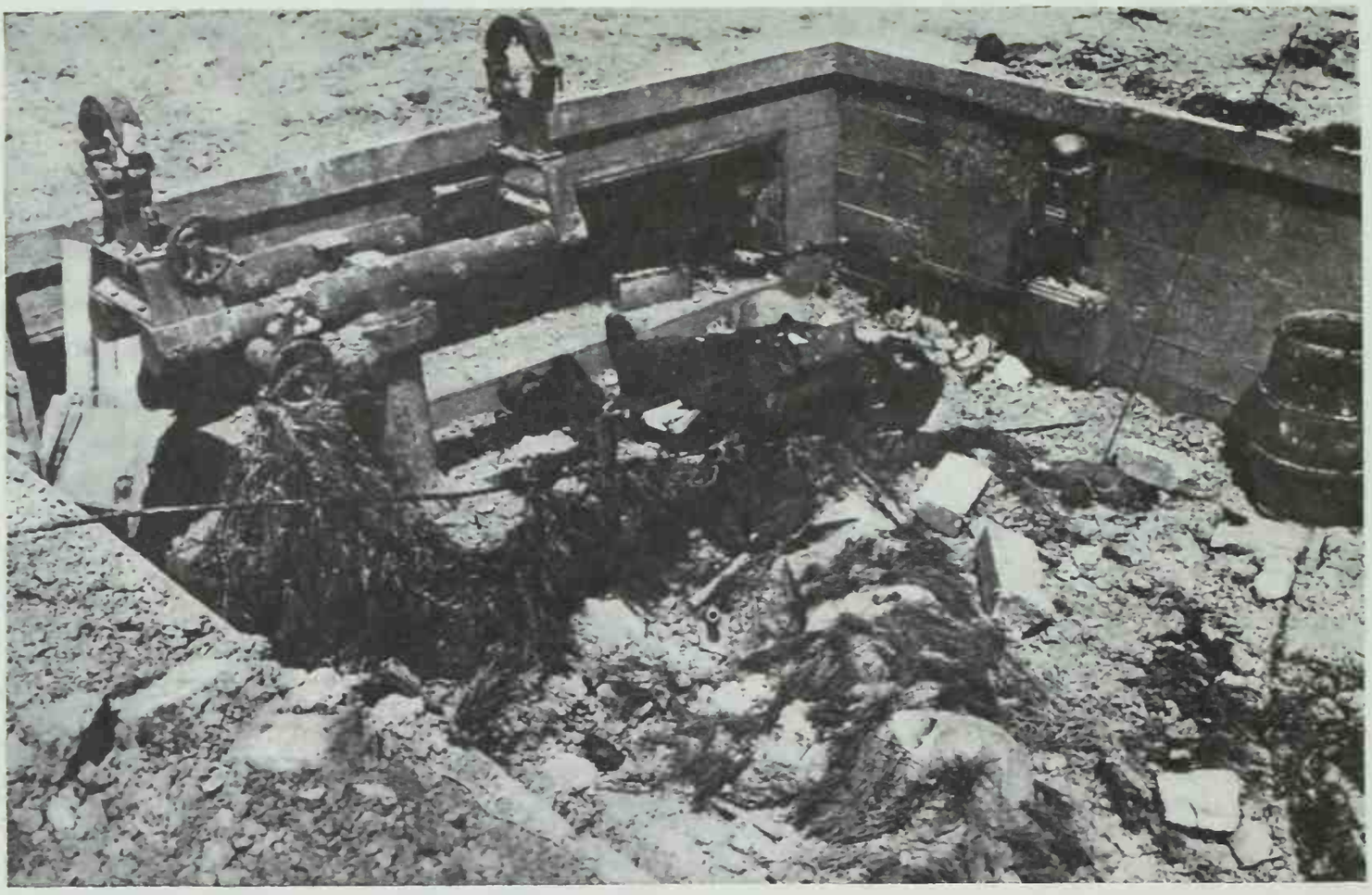
The first and chief objectives were the gun emplacements and the OP near the end of the Point. Company E had the OP and No. 3 position as its assignment; Company D, the western gun emplacements (4, 5, and 6); Company F, guns 1 and 2 and the machine-gun position at the edge of the cliff, just east of the main fortified area. Once these objectives were taken, the plan had been to assemble at a phase line near the south edge of the fortified area. From here, D, F, and most of E would strike inland for the coastal highway about 1,000 yards south, cross it, and establish a road block against enemy movement from the west. A platoon of Company E was to remain on the Point with the headquarters group and arrange for perimeter defense of the captured fortifications.

There were, inevitably, deviations from this plan. Some Rangers of Companies D and E failed to reach the assembly area in time for the next phase of movement, or were kept on the Point to meet unexpected developments. On the eastern flank, two boat teams of Company F became involved in an action that lasted most of the day. But, by and large, movement went very nearly according to plan, a plan based on confidence in the ability of small, pick-up groups to work independently toward main objectives. This confidence was rewarded by success.

As the first Ranger elements left the cliff and started for their objectives, they met no opposition except near the OP. Most of the Rangers saw no enemy, and were hardly aware of sporadic fire coming from along the cliff to the west of the Point. Their main

*MAP NO. 4—Advance to the Highway*

696036°—46—3



TOP OF GERMAN OP POSITION, *looking toward sea (12 June 1944).*

trouble was in finding and identifying the gun positions in the wreckage of the fortified area. One party after another reached its allotted emplacement, to make the same discovery: the open gun positions were pulverized, the casemates were heavily damaged, but there was no sign of the guns or of artillery equipment. Evidently, the 155's had been removed from the Point before the period of major bombardments. The advance groups moved on inland toward the assembly area (Map No. 4, page 20).

The only fighting took place at the tip of the Point. Here, the first men up from LCA 861 found themselves about 20 feet to seaward of the massive and undamaged concrete OP. As S/Sgt. Charles H. Denbo and Private Roberts crawled five feet toward a trench, small-arms fire, including machine guns, started up from slits in the OP. The Rangers threw four grenades at the slits, and three went in. The machine gun stopped firing, but Denbo was wounded by a rifle bullet. Lieutenant Lapres, Sgt. Andrew J. Yardley, Pfc. William D. Bell, and Tech/Sgt. Harold W. Gunther joined up in the trench. Yardley had a bazooka, and his first round hit the edge of the firing slit; the second went through. Taking advantage of this, the group left Yardley to watch the embrasure and dashed around the OP without drawing enemy fire. On the other side of the structure they found Corporal Aguzzi, watching the main entrance from the landward side.

Lapres' party pushed on toward gun position No. 4 and points inland.

Aguzzi had come up from LCA 862, southeast of the OP, with Lieutenant Leagans and Sergeant Cleaves. As they started away from the edge, joined by Tech. 5 LeRoy J. Thompson and Pfc. Charles H. Bellows, Jr., they saw a German close to the OP, throwing grenades over the cliff from shelter of a trench. The OP was not their job, but the party decided to go after the grenadier. Bellows crawled over to No. 3 gun position to cover the advance of the party. They threw grenades at the German and moved into the trench when he ducked under the entrance to the OP. Aguzzi found a shell hole from which he could watch the main entrance, while three Rangers tried to skirt the OP on the east and get at it from the rear. Cleaves was wounded by a mine — the only casualty from this cause during the day. Thompson got close enough to hear a radio working inside the OP, looked for the aerial on top, and shot it off. After throwing a grenade through the entrance Lieutenant Leagans and Thompson decided to let the OP wait for demolitions, and went off on their original mission farther inland. Aguzzi, staying to watch the entrance, was surprised a few minutes later by the appearance of Lieutenant Lapres' party, coming from the rear of the OP. Two small groups of Rangers had been attacking the OP from opposite sides, neither aware of the other's presence.

This was not the last group to pass Aguzzi from the tip of the Point. After Lapres' men had moved past the OP, four more Rangers from LCA 861 came up the single rope. As they joined Yardley in the trench facing the embrasure, enemy small-arms fire opened up again. The five Rangers talked it over. They had further missions on the other side of the OP, but there were still enemy in the structure, who could not be left free to bring fire on the men still down on the beach. Medeiros and Yardley considered going down to get demolitions, but decided they couldn't give enough covering fire to get a Ranger close to the embrasure with the explosive. Finally, it was decided to leave Yardley and Medeiros in position to "button-up" the seaward side of the OP while the others went past. With Yardley and Medeiros watching to cover their movement with fire, the three Rangers went along the trench to pass the OP on the west side. Near the end of the trench, small-arms fire came at them from some position on the top of the OP which Medeiros could not spot, and Pfc. George W. Mackey was killed; the two others made it safely to the inland side.

For the rest of D Day and through the following night, Yardley and Medeiros stayed in their trench on one side of the OP while Aguzzi watched the main entrance. Neither guard knew the other was there. Demolitions could have been used on Aguzzi's side, but nobody bothered to bring them up for use; there was no sign of action from the enemy in the OP.[1]

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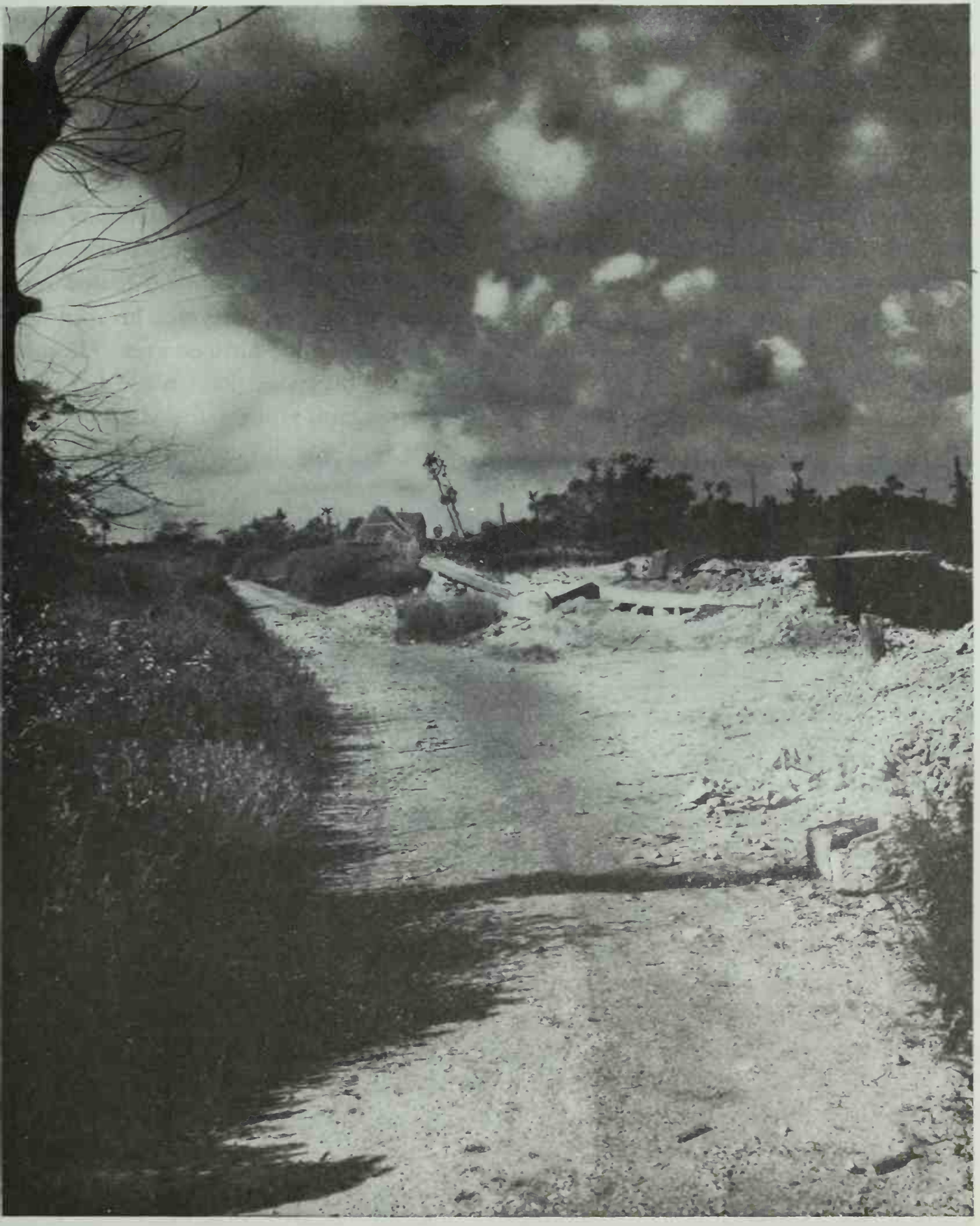
[1] On the afternoon of D+1 the nest was finally cleaned out. Two satchel charges of C–2 were thrown in the entrance, and Aguzzi, still on guard, figured the enemy must be wiped out. But eight unwounded Germans swarmed out with their hands up, and only one body was found inside. The Rangers were never sure how many enemy had been in the post, for the OP, like most positions in the fortified area, was connected with underground passages which the Rangers had neither numbers nor time to investigate fully. These underground routes, connecting shelters with each other and with a maze of ruined trenches, probably contributed to troubles on the Point during D Day.

Except at the OP, the first Ranger groups had crossed through the fortified area without seeing an enemy. The last parties to arrive from the beach began to get some evidence that there were still Germans close by. The antiaircraft position just west of the Point put bursts of automatic fire on any Rangers who exposed themselves, and sniping started from the area near gun position No. 6. A group from Company D (LCA 858) was working through that vicinity; their story is known only from the one survivor of the action.

Pfc. William Cruz, slightly wounded on the beach, came up just after Colonel Rudder had moved his CP to the cliff top (about 0745), and Cruz was assigned to guard the CP. He and Ranger Eberle went after a sniper near gun position No. 4, and in doing so drew machine-gun fire from the antiaircraft position to the west. Somebody ordered them to "go after it." When they started out, sliding from cover of one crater to another, they came up with Tech/Sgt. Richard J. Spleen, Tech/Sgt. Clifton E. Mains, and a group of eight or ten Rangers, in cover just west of No. 6 position. This party was considering an attack on the antiaircraft position, but hesitated to open fire for fear of drawing German artillery shells, which were beginning to hit near the fortified area from positions somewhere inland. After a time the Rangers started to crawl through shell holes toward the antiaircraft position, slowed by fear of mines. A German helmet came up out of a crater ahead; the Rangers near Cruz saw the stick under it and knew enough to avoid fire, but somebody just behind them took the bait. Almost immediately, artillery and mortar shells began to search the area. Bunched too closely in a row of shell holes, the Company D party took off in all directions to spread out.

Private Cruz moved back toward No. 6 emplacement, and found himself completely alone in the maze of craters. Yelling to locate the others, he heard Sergeant Mains call "OK." After a 15-minute wait, with enemy fire diminishing, Cruz began to crawl back toward the Point. Just as he reached a ruined trench near No. 6 position, he saw Sergeant Spleen and two other Rangers disappear around the corner of a connecting trench. Without warning, intense small-arms fire started up, not only from the antiaircraft position to the west but from German machine pistols close by. As he hugged the bottom of the trench, Cruz could hear men moving. A few Germans passed by on his limited horizon, but without noticing him. Then, only a few yards from his hole, guns were thrown into the air; Cruz thought they came up from the trench where Spleen's party had been. Cruz kept quiet, the burst of firing died away quickly, and no one else came in sight. After a considerable wait, Cruz crawled back toward the CP, only 200 yards away. Near the wrecked No. 6 emplacement, he passed a pile of American weapons lying on the ground—8 or 9 rifles, and some revolvers and Tommy guns. He figured these were left there when the Rangers surrendered.

Observation on the Point was so limited that no one else had seen the action or any part of it. Ten Rangers had simply disappeared, with Cruz's report and the abandoned weapons as the only indication of their



RUINS ON EXIT ROAD, *halfway from the Point to the highway. Ranger advance parties began here to encounter scattered opposition from enemy groups near the next farmhouses. (Photo taken June 1945.)*

fate. The best guess was that the Germans had attacked by filtering into the area through wrecked trenches connecting the fortified zone with the antiaircraft gun; as another possibility, they may have emerged from underground shelters on the Point.

Cruz's report served notice at Colonel Rudder's CP that trouble could be expected from the west flank of the Point. In fact, enemy opposition based on the antiaircraft position was to be a source of serious difficulty for the next two days.

### *Advance to the Highway*

The revival of German resistance at the Point was unknown to the Ranger parties which had been first to cross it, drawing only scattered fire from the western flank. As they passed beyond the fortified area, some artillery and mortar shells began to drop near them, and they were aware of light small-arms fire from ahead (south). This slowed down the leaders, and the original parties of two and three men began to merge in larger groups. The Rangers from Companies E and D (less elements detained on the Point) tended to come together on an axis of advance along the north–south exit road from the Point to the highway. Somewhat to their east, the one boat team of Company F that left the Point area struck south on a course through fields. The early advance inland can best be followed in terms of these two main groups (Map No. 4, page 20).

The bulk of the group that started down the exit road was made up of Rangers from LCA's 888 (Company E) and 858 (Company D). The party from 888 had come up, after some delay, on extension ladders and started out with 15 men under 1st Sgt. Robert W. Lang. After finding No. 3 casemate a junk-pile of broken steel and concrete, Lang's group moved south. They began to meet artillery fire, coming in salvos of three, and shifting toward the Point with each salvo. Lang stopped for a moment to try for a contact on his 536 radio, with the idea of warning the fire-support party that his men were moving out of the fortified area. He could not make his connection. When he started forward again, artillery fire was falling between him and his men ahead, so Lang turned left into the torn-up fields, where he picked up three stray Rangers of Company E, and then joined a group under Lieutenant Arman of Company F.

The Company E Rangers meanwhile were reaching the assembly area, near the start of the exit road. Here they met up with a dozen men of Company D, who had checked gun positions Nos. 4 and 5 and had left Sergeant Spleen with a few men near No. 6 to deal with enemy who were firing from the antiaircraft position.

The D and E group now amounted to about 30 men. Without waiting for others to arrive, they started along the exit road, taking as much cover as possible in a communications trench along its edge, and keeping in a single file. German artillery, estimated as light guns (75's or 88's), were searching the area with time fire, and from the assembly area onward the Rangers began to meet machine-gun fire from the right flank, and small-arms fire to their left front. They suffered serious casualties in the next few hundred yards: seven killed and eight

wounded. Despite these losses, the total size of the force was increasing as it caught up with small advance parties who had left the Point earlier, or as latecomers tagged on to the rear of the file.

The first objective was a group of ruined farm buildings, almost halfway to the highway. German snipers who had been using the building pulled out before the Rangers got there. Fire from destroyers' guns as well as enemy shells was hitting around the farm, and the Rangers made no pause. Ahead, the ground was open, and the trench used thus far in the advance came to an end at the buildings. The next cover, 35 to 40 yards south, was a communications trench that crossed the exit road. To reach it, men were sent out one or two at a time, moving fast

FARM BUILDINGS ON EXIT ROAD *about 200 yards from the highway, reached by Rangers about 0800 on D Day. Opposition ceased beyond this point. (Photo, looking south, taken June 1945.)*

and taking different routes across an area exposed to machine-gun fire. The only casualty was a Ranger who fell on a comrade's bayonet as he jumped into the trench.

Beyond the trench a pair of concrete pillars flanked the exit road, with a crude roadblock between the pillars. Three Germans came straight down the road toward the Point, spotted the Rangers, and ducked behind the block. BAR fire failed to flush them out, but after one round (a dud) from a bazooka the Germans fled. The Rangers resumed their advance down the exit road. Some machine-gun fire had been coming from the next farm; Lapres reached it with his four men to find the enemy had left. For a few minutes Lapres was isolated there, as machine-gun fire from the flanks pinned down the main Ranger party. Some friendly support fire, which the Rangers could not trace, apparently silenced the machine guns.

This was the last of German resistance, and Lapres' advance party made the final stretch to the blacktop[1] without any trouble. As they came to it they saw Tech. 5 Davis of Company F coming through the fields on their left, and a few minutes later a larger party of Company F men came along the highway from the east. At 0815, barely an hour since the landing, the Rangers had reached their final objective—good time, even though enemy opposition had clearly suffered from disorganization. As the survivors of the group put it later, the reason for the speed of their advance was simple: enemy artillery fire seemed to be "tailing them all the way," and this discouraged any delay.

[1] The Rangers' term for the paved highway.

Most of Company F's parties had stayed near the Point, drawn successively into a fight on the eastern flank. The party that reached the highway was from LCA 887, led by Lieutenant Arman and Sergeant Petty. Petty and three men had left the cliff edge first, found No. 2 gun position destroyed and empty, and then started south on a course about 200 yards east of the exit road. When they reached the outskirts of the fortified area, Lieutenant Arman joined them with five more Rangers, and decided to push toward the blacktop without waiting for the rest of his platoon.

Their course led through what had been marked on their maps as a mined area, wired and dotted with posts set against air landings. The bombardment, which had churned up the ground even this far from the Point, may have detonated the mines or buried them in debris, for they gave the Rangers no trouble. Lieutenant Arman's men could see shells hit along the exit road to their right; for their own part, they saw no enemy. Enemy mortars somewhere to the south put down pattern fire in fields near them, but the fire was apparently unobserved and caused no casualties. The group of a dozen men worked forward in squad column, covering the distance from crater to crater in short bounds. As they came to the ruins of a farm lane, running north–south between hedgerows, Sergeant Lang and three Company E men came over from the east and joined the advance.

Lieutenant Arman led the party straight down the lane, while Petty went left across fields to scout toward the Chateau. There was no sign of enemy on this flank and Petty

rejoined at the intersection of the lane with the blacktop highway, where the Rangers turned west, moving along the edges. As they reached the cluster of houses forming the hamlet of Au Guay, a machine gun opened up about 100 yards ahead, somewhere near the road. The enemy had delivered his fire too soon; the Rangers scattered without suffering casualties and began to work around the south edge of the hamlet to reach the enemy gun. Sergeant Petty, with two men, was startled by the sudden appearance of two Germans apparently rising out of the ground, not ten feet away. Petty dropped flat and fired his BAR as he fell. The burst missed, but the Germans were already shouting "Kamerad." They had come out of a deep shelter hole which Petty's men had not spotted. The Rangers found no other enemy at Au Guay, and the machine gun had disappeared when they reached the west side of the hamlet. Within a few minutes Arman's party met the Rangers who had come out to the highway along the exit road.

Beside the two main groups whose course has been followed to the highway, several smaller parties reached the same objective on their own. One of these can be followed in detail; this is worthwhile as illustrating other aspects of a "confused" action. The continuity in this story is furnished by Private Anderson. Landing in LCA 884, he went up on the ladders of the next craft to his left, at the extreme left of the landing zone. On top, he and two other 884 men decided on their own to go after the German emplacement, somewhere near the cliff edge to their east, which was still raking the landing beach with automatic weapons. (They were unaware that some of 883's men had already started on the same mission, nor did they see them during their own effort.) Moving fast along a hedgerow that skirted the cliff, they got to within a hundred yards of the enemy emplacement, could not locate the position of the guns, and decided these must be out of reach below the cliff top.

Reversing course back to the ladders, Anderson left the other two Rangers and joined Pfc. John Bacho and S/Sgt. James E. Fulton, who were just starting south through the fields to make the blacktop. The three men followed along hedgerow lines, using the "Buddy" system, one man covering as two moved, in a leap-frogging advance. Within a hundred yards they caught up with Lieutenant Hill and two other Rangers from 884, going in the same direction. The only sign of enemy was occasional sniper fire. At the first lateral hedgerow they turned west; Bacho and Fulton went through the hedgerow to guard the flanks and lost touch with the others, eventually joining Lieutenant Arman's group near the highway.

Hill's party, now four men, worked west to reach the double-hedgerowed lane, picking up a willing prisoner from the field on their right. Machine-gun fire to the west, near the exit road, drew their attention, and the four Rangers started angling in that direction. As they were passing through a field of stubble wheat, automatic fire came at them from the direction of Pointe du Hoe, and forced them to crawl. So far the gun they were after had not spotted them and was not firing in their direction. About 25 feet from the exit road, Lieutenant Hill and Anderson reached the cover of a low embankment. The

machine gun was just beyond the road ahead of them. Hill stood up to look at the position and to Anderson's amazement shouted, "You . . . . . , you couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a bass fiddle!" This drew enemy fire; as Hill dropped back into cover, Anderson tossed him a grenade, Hill threw it, and the machine-gun fire stopped. A few minutes later, Lieutenant Lapres came down the exit road with the advance group of Company E, and Hill's action may have saved this party from surprise fire. The four Company F men now served as flank patrol for the further advance along the exit road, moving one hedgerow to the left of Lapres. Anderson, as he neared the blacktop, fired at somebody to the west near the road intersection, but was not sure (later) whether it was a German or Sergeant Lang.

The Rangers at the highway numbered about 50 men, with all three companies represented. Their mission was to block movement along the coastal highway; expecting to see the 116th Infantry and the 5th Rangers arrive at any moment on the Vierville road, their main concern was the highway west, toward Grandcamp. Such enemy resistance as had been met seemed to come from west and south, so they made their dispositions accordingly (Map No. 7, page 46). Bordering the south side of the highway near its junction with the exit road, a series of narrow fields ended in a hedgerow that ran east–west, overlooked orchards sloping down to a creek, and gave some observation across the small valley of the creek. Along the hedgerow they found enemy dugouts and fox holes conveniently prepared on the north side of the hedge. The contingents from Company E and Company F occupied this line for a distance of four fields, two to each side of a lane that ran from the highway down to the creek. An outpost of Company F men went down the gentle slope toward the creek and took position where they could watch the farther side of the little valley. A German dugout near the lane was picked for a CP, used by Lieutenant Arman (Company F) and Lieutenants Lapres and Leagans of Company E. Except for two stragglers picked up in the fields, there was no sign of enemy in the neighborhood.

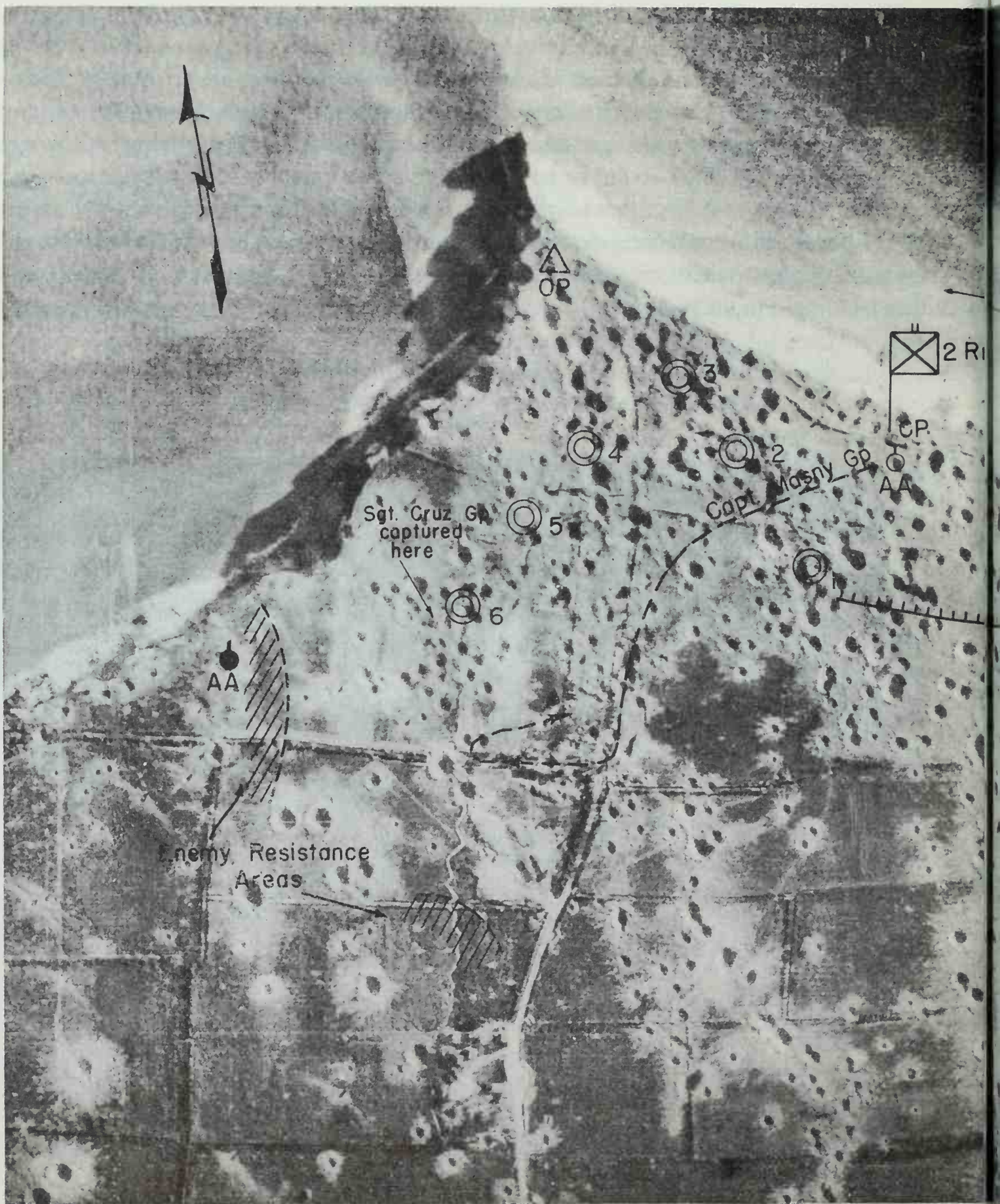
The 20 men of Company D were given the assignment of covering the west flank toward Grandcamp. Sergeant Lomell placed his men along both edges of the highway, with a combat outpost at the western end of his line consisting of a BAR man and six riflemen with a grenade launcher. This outpost could cover the road and had good observation toward the valley between the Rangers and Grandcamp. The rest of the Company D men could watch the fields north and south of the highway. Toward the sea, the fields were believed to be mined, and this would simplify defense on that side.

Active patrolling was started at once on all sides of the thinly-held positions. About 0900, a two-man patrol from D went down the double-hedgerowed lane that ran south from the highway near Company D's outpost. About 250 yards along the lane, Sergeant Lomell and S/Sgt. Jack E. Kuhn walked into a camouflaged gun position; there, set up in battery, were five of the enemy 155's missing from the Point. They were in position to fire toward Utah Beach, but could easily have been switched for use

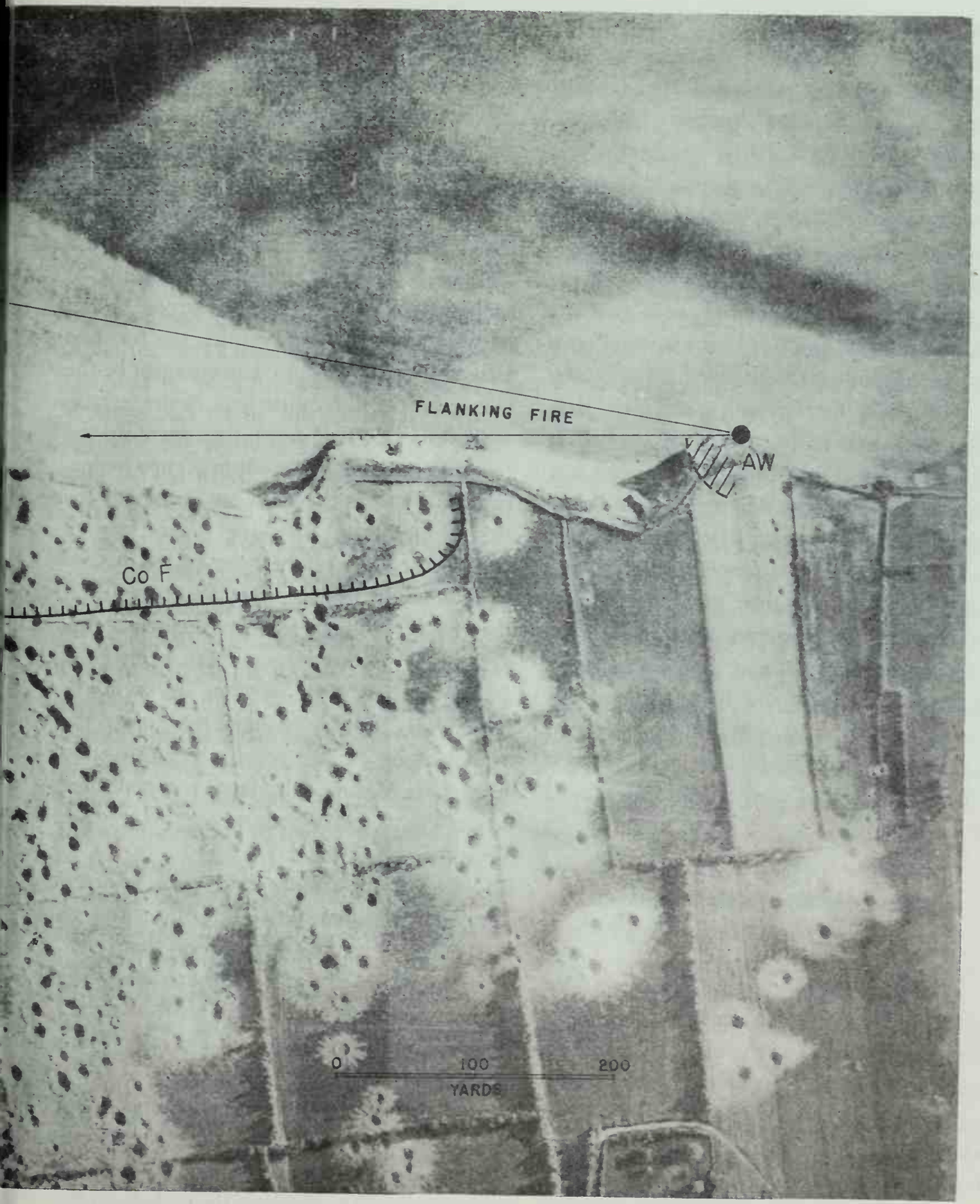
against Omaha. Piles of ammunition were at hand, points on the shells and charges ready, but there was no indication of recent firing. Not a German was in sight, and occasional sniper fire from a distance could hardly be intended as a defense of the battery. So effective was the camouflage that Lomell and Kuhn, though they could later spot the guns from the highway, had seen nothing until they were right in the position.

With Kuhn covering him against possible defenders, Sergeant Lomell went into the battery and set off thermite grenades in the recoil mechanism of two guns, effectively disabling them. After bashing in the sights of a third gun, he went back for more grenades. Before he could return, another patrol from Company E had finished the job. This patrol, led by S/Sgt. Frank A. Rupinski, had come through the fields and (like Lomell

LANE LEADING SOUTH *from highway, along east side of fields held by advance group of Rangers during D Day. CP of this group was about 300 yards down this trail. (Photo taken June 1945.)*




*MAP NO. 5—Morning Near the Point*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and Kuhn) were in the gun position before they saw it. Failing to notice the fact that some disabling work had already been done, Rupinski's patrol dropped a thermite grenade down each barrel, and removed some of the sights. After throwing grenades into the powder charges and starting a fire, the patrol decided the guns were out of action and withdrew. A runner was sent off at once to the Point, bearing word that the missing guns, primary objective at the Point, had been found and neutralized.

Just why the German guns were thus left completely undefended and unused is still a mystery. One theory, based on the fact that some artillerymen were captured that day on the Point, was that bombardment caught them there in quarters, and they were unable to get back to their position. All that can be stated with assurance is that the Germans were put off balance and disorganized by the combined effects of bombardment and assault, to such an extent that they never used the most dangerous battery near the assault beaches but left it in condition to be destroyed by weak patrols.

### *Morning at the Point: Action on the Left Flank*

The D-Day fighting at Pointe du Hoe can be followed in terms of two main groups: the force that reached the highway and took positions there, and the Rangers who stayed in or near the fortified area at the Point itself. Some stayed according to plan; others were diverted from going inland by circumstance and, above all, by the revival of German resistance near or in the fortified area. Two of the three boat teams of Company F were stopped by this resistance in carrying out their first assignments, becoming involved in a series of actions that held them all day near the cliffs just east of the fortified zone (Map No. 5, page 32).

LCA's 883 and 884 had beached on this flank, several hundred yards to left of their planned touchdown. Lieutenant Wintz, in command of 883, failed at first to realize that he was facing the cliffs outside the fortified area, and thought bomb damage must be the reason for the unfamiliar look of the terrain. When the first half-dozen men were up the ropes, Wintz sent them out to occupy hedgerows meeting at the southeast corner of the first field inland. Ducking in and out of craters, the men reached the ruined hedgerows without drawing fire; Wintz sent out the rest of the boat team as they came up, except for the mortarmen. Men from LCA 884 were beginning to come up on 883's ladders, as Wintz went along the cliffs to the west looking for the company commander, Capt. Otto Masny. But Masny had gone over to the Point, and Wintz was not to see him until the end of the day.

Lieutenant Wintz had now oriented himself. His men, plus some from 884 (a few others from 884 went off on their own, inland), were just east of the base of the Point. South of them were shell-ploughed fields stretching toward St-Pierre-du-Mont and crossed by only a few hedgerows. Occasional artillery fire and some sniping began from this direction, forcing the Rangers into cover and costing them one rifleman. To the east, about 200 yards along the cliffs from the Company F position, the German automatic

weapon (variously described as a machine gun or a light antiaircraft gun) which had caused so much trouble during the landing was now firing toward the Point over the heads of Wintz's men. Except that the gun was somewhere close to the cliff, its position could not be located.

This enemy emplacement, sited to cause trouble for the Rangers still along the beach, was included in the original Company F objectives, and Lieutenant Wintz decided to "go after it" with five men. Sgt. Charles F. Weilage had set up his mortar in a crater near the cliff, ready to fire once the enemy's position was fixed. A hedgerow skirted the cliff edge eastward; using a drainage ditch on the inland side of this hedgerow, the party worked slowly along, making every effort to stay under cover.

As far as Wintz knew, this was the first attempt to get at the troublesome gun east of the Point. Actually, it was the third—a fact that brings out again the scattered and impromptu nature of the early fighting near the Point, and the difficulties of maintaining control or observation in the cut-up terrain.

By the time Wintz started (somewhere between 0800 and 0830), two other groups had gone east to reach the German gun position. Almost immediately after getting up, Private Anderson and two other Company F Rangers had started out, failed to locate the gun, and returned (see above, page 29). Captain Masny, before he went over to the Point, had sent out a three-man patrol consisting of 1st Sgt. Charles E. Frederick, S/Sgt. Robert G. Youso, and Pfc. Herman W. Kiihnl. They started along an east–west hedgerow one field inland, with Frederick covering the other two for the first move. Someone brought up an order for Frederick to report back to Captain Masny; the other two went on, thinking Frederick was following. They got to within 20 yards of where they thought the gun position must be, and as Youso half rose to throw a grenade he was shot by a German rifleman. Kiihnl went back to find Frederick, while Youso crawled toward safety on the seaward side of the cliff-skirting hedgerow. The two leading Rangers of Wintz's party met him there after he had made about 75 yards.

Wintz's small attacking force was strung out along 200 yards of the cliff hedgerow, with Wintz near the rear, bringing up four more riflemen and an observer for the mortar. The enemy had spotted their movement, and small-arms fire was covering an open space along the route, wounding one man and slowing progress. Nevertheless, the advance was still continuing when an order came from the rear to pull back.

The order had come from some distance and was based on a misapprehension. Sergeant Frederick, called back earlier to report to Captain Masny, had gone as far as No. 1 gun position without locating him. Here, Frederick received the order by word of mouth for bringing Wintz back. Frederick relayed the message, but was worried by it and went further into the fortified area to find Masny and verify the order. When Frederick located his captain, Masny explained that he thought Wintz's party was starting south toward the highway, and the purpose of his order had been to keep them near the Point. Captain Masny *did* want the German machine gun neutralized, so Ser-

geant Frederick sent a messenger at once, revoking the recall order and telling Wintz to push the attack. It was too late; Wintz and his party were back in their starting positions, having brought their two wounded in.

Lieutenant Wintz reorganized for another effort, again along the cliff edge. It was the fourth attempt at the flanking gun position. Just after movement started, orders came to halt the attack. The message came on SCR 300, one of the few times that a radio order got through from the CP on the Point to any of the scattered Ranger parties. Colonel Rudder had decided to try naval fire on the cliff strongpoint. Wintz's men were well situated to observe (and enjoy) the results. A destroyer pulled close in,[1] and, according to the Rangers' recollection, seven salvos were used: they blew the top of the cliff into the sea, and that ended the Rangers' troubles with automatic fire from the eastern cliff position, though German snipers continued to operate from that sector.

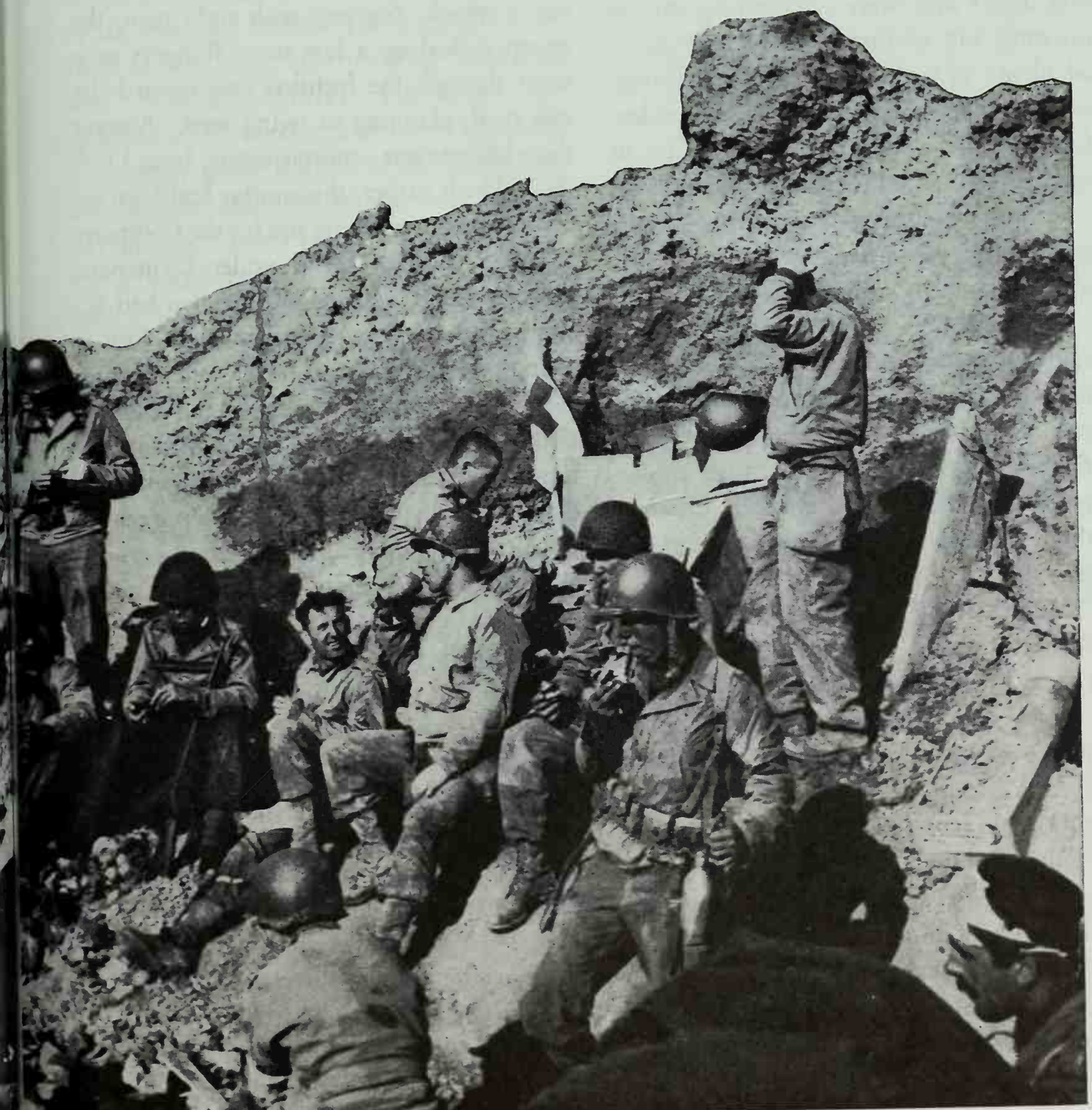
It was now well along in the morning (time estimates vary from 1100 to 1200). Before naval fire solved the worst difficulty on the east flank, several hours had been spent in action which illustrated the difficulties of coordinating action among the scattered Ranger parties. Most of the troops from LCA's 883 and 884, originally scheduled to move on to the highway, had become thoroughly involved near the Point and were now kept in the right-angle hedgerow position selected by Lieutenant Wintz at the start of his action. It was suitable for protecting the east side of the Rangers' position from attack.

[1] According to testimony by the communications section, this was a British destroyer, with spotting done by Lieutenant Johnson, observer of the 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

### *Morning at the Point: The CP Group*

Colonel Rudder had gone on top at 0745, and established his CP in a crater between the cliff and a destroyed antiaircraft gun emplacement. Most of the assault parties had left the fortified area on their several missions, and Colonel Rudder could only wait for reports. Observation in the churned-up wasteland left by the bombardment was very limited, and for the moment there was little that he could do to exercise control. However, there was some work to do near at hand, as the enemy gave disturbing signs of reviving his resistance close to the Point.

COL. RUDDER'S CP *was set in a cratered niche at the edge of the cliff. German artillery searched for it, but most of the enemy shells were "overs" into the sea. Lt. Eikner, in charge of the communications section, is near the center, drinking from his canteen.*



Enemy snipers were active, some of them operating inside the fortified area, and steps were immediately taken to eradicate them. Some of the last parties up the cliff, together with headquarters personnel, were sent out to hunt them down. These efforts, repeated many times, were never entirely successful. Through the rest of D Day, the CP and the whole Point area were harassed by snipers who came out of tunnels and trenches, to find plenty of cover in the cratered debris. Patrols combed over the maze of underground positions, but it seemed impossible to clean them out with the small force available. At no time were the snipers numerous, and there were periods when the Rangers could move in the open with impunity, anywhere on the Point. But these intervals of calm would be broken at any time by scattered small-arms fire from every direction, or by bursts of automatic fire from the German antiaircraft position, 300 yards west on the edge of the cliff. Colonel Rudder sustained a thigh wound from this fire during the morning.

Within a half hour after Colonel Rudder's arrival on top, a first attempt to knock out this western strongpoint had ended with the destruction of Sergeant Spleen's small attacking force (see above, page 24). This made it clear that the antiaircraft position was the main center of enemy resistance near the Point, and the most dangerous because it afforded a base either for attack into the Rangers' foothold on the Point or for efforts to cut off the parties that had gone inland.

Captain Masny, after helping to set up Company F's positions on the left flank, had come over to find Colonel Rudder and was impressed into service at headquarters. He was given the mission of forming a perimeter defense for the CP, using headquarters personnel and any Rangers who had not gone inland. As he was organizing this defense, fire opened up again from the antiaircraft position. Like Sergeant Spleen earlier, Masny collected the nearest men at hand and went out to attack. Starting with eight men, the group picked up a few more Rangers as it went through the fortified area toward the exit road, planning to swing west. Among the additions was a mortar section from LCA 722. Much earlier, this mortar had been set up to deliver supporting fire for the Company E group moving inland under Lieutenant Lapres. S/Sgt. Millard W. Hayden had accompanied the group, taking with him a sound power phone and half a mile of wire. No calls for fire had come, and communication had been broken off, so the mortar section decided to move inland and join Hayden. Before they had gone far, they were recalled for support of Masny's group, which also had a 30-cal. machine gun, taken off a DUKW.

Masny's force turned west where the exit road met the remains of a lane that led toward the enemy strongpoint. They had made only a hundred yards progress when rifle, machine-gun, and mortar fire opened up, from their left flank as well as from the strongpoint. Scattered among craters, the Rangers started a fire fight, the mortar set up in a hole about 50 yards to the rear of the riflemen where Masny directed its fire. When a white flag showed over the German emplacement, the men with Masny were wary and stayed under cover. But two Rangers

on the right of the skirmish line, near gun position No. 6, stood up in the open. Masny's yell of warning was too late to save them from a burst of machine-gun bullets, and the fire fight resumed. German artillery came into action, from somewhere inland. The first rounds were over; the next rounds began to "creep" back until they bracketed the hedgerow-marked lane which was the axis of the Rangers' attack. There the fire held, right on the lane, "the prettiest fire I ever saw" (Captain Masny). His attack was smashed in short order; four men were killed and nearly every Ranger in the group was hit. Masny, wounded in the arm, shouted "Withdraw! Every man for himself!" after the second burst, and the remnants crawled back to the exit road and over to the CP, with snipers killing two more on the way. All its ammunition shot away, the mortar was abandoned at its firing position.

That was the last effort of the day to assault the antiaircraft emplacement; the two ill-fated attempts had cost 15 to 20 casualties. Several attempts were made to knock out the antiaircraft position by naval fire, with the *Satterlee* expending many rounds in futile bombardment. The position was just too far from the edge of the cliff to be blasted off by undercutting fire (such as destroyed the emplacement on the other side of the Point), and yet was too close to the cliff to be reached directly by the flat trajectory of the destroyer's guns, from their lower firing level.

Naval supporting fires nevertheless gave the Rangers inestimable aid, and from very early in the assault. At 0728, the *Satterlee* made its first contact with the Naval Shore Fire Control Party, and was immediately given target requests followed by spotting reports from the shore observers. However, radio transmission was uncertain (SCR 284), and a new difficulty arose when the signals party moved to the CP on top of the cliff. Attempts to communicate by radio drew enemy artillery fire immediately, suggesting that the Germans were picking up the transmission and using it to register on the CP. Lieutenant Eikner then turned to other means, and made successful contact by signal lamps. These were used with good results during the rest of the day, though radio transmission for fire control was resumed in the afternoon.[1] Personnel of the fire control party observed results not merely from the Point but from positions inland, sending spotting data back to the Point by SCR 536 for relay to the ships. Targets given the *Satterlee* included inland assembly areas at St-Pierre and Au Guay, road junctions, strongpoints toward Grandcamp, and, especially, the antiaircraft position west of the Point. By 1723 the *Satterlee* had expended 70 percent (the prescribed maximum) of her ammunition, having fired 164 salvos, plus six minutes of fire for effect, in support of the Rangers since H Hour. The *Barton* and *Thompson* moved in near the Point to relieve the *Satterlee,* and before dark the NSFCP transmitted data for night fire on road junctions and other targets.

Little success was had in communicating with friendly ground forces, either the 5th Rangers or 29th Division units. Apparently

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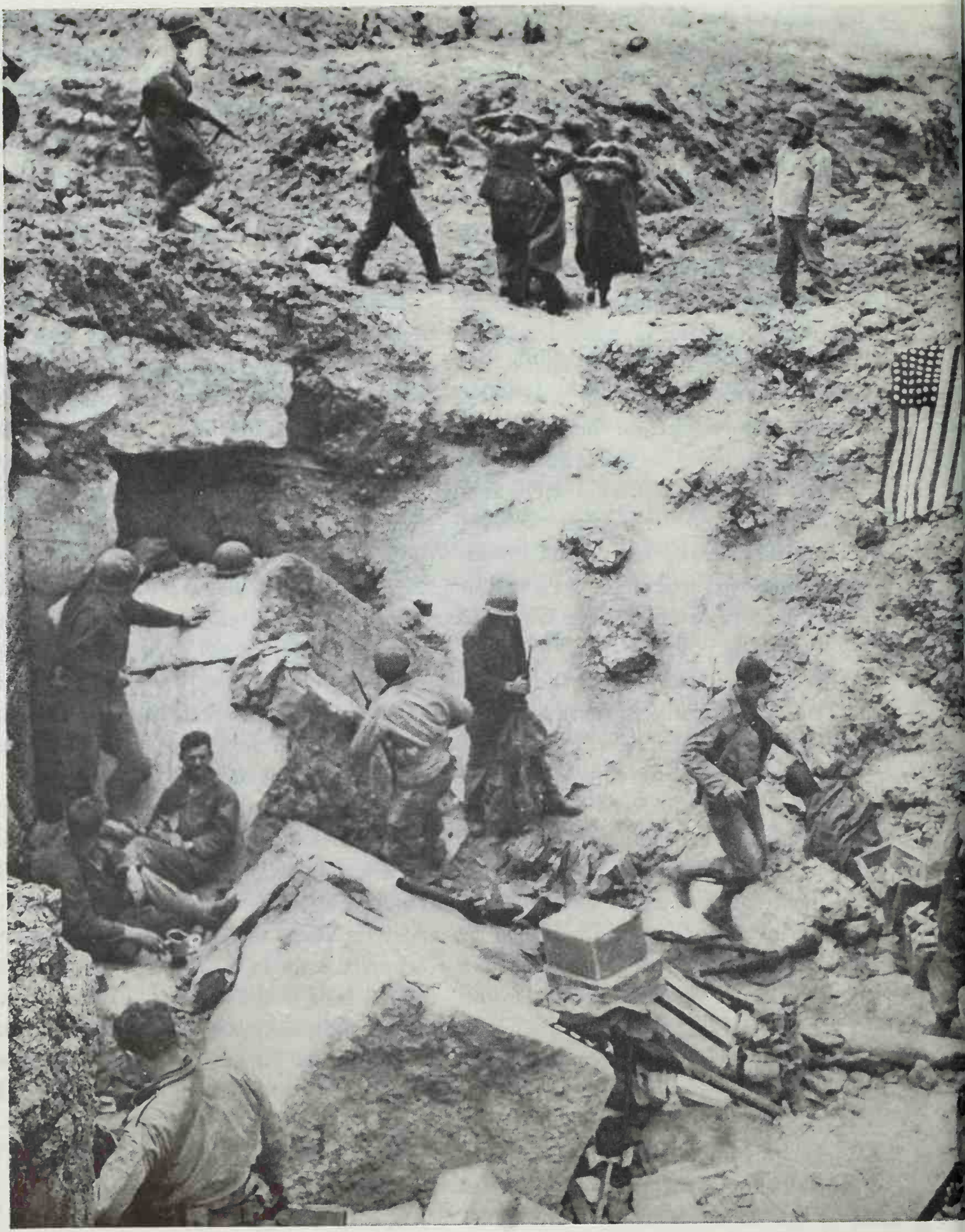
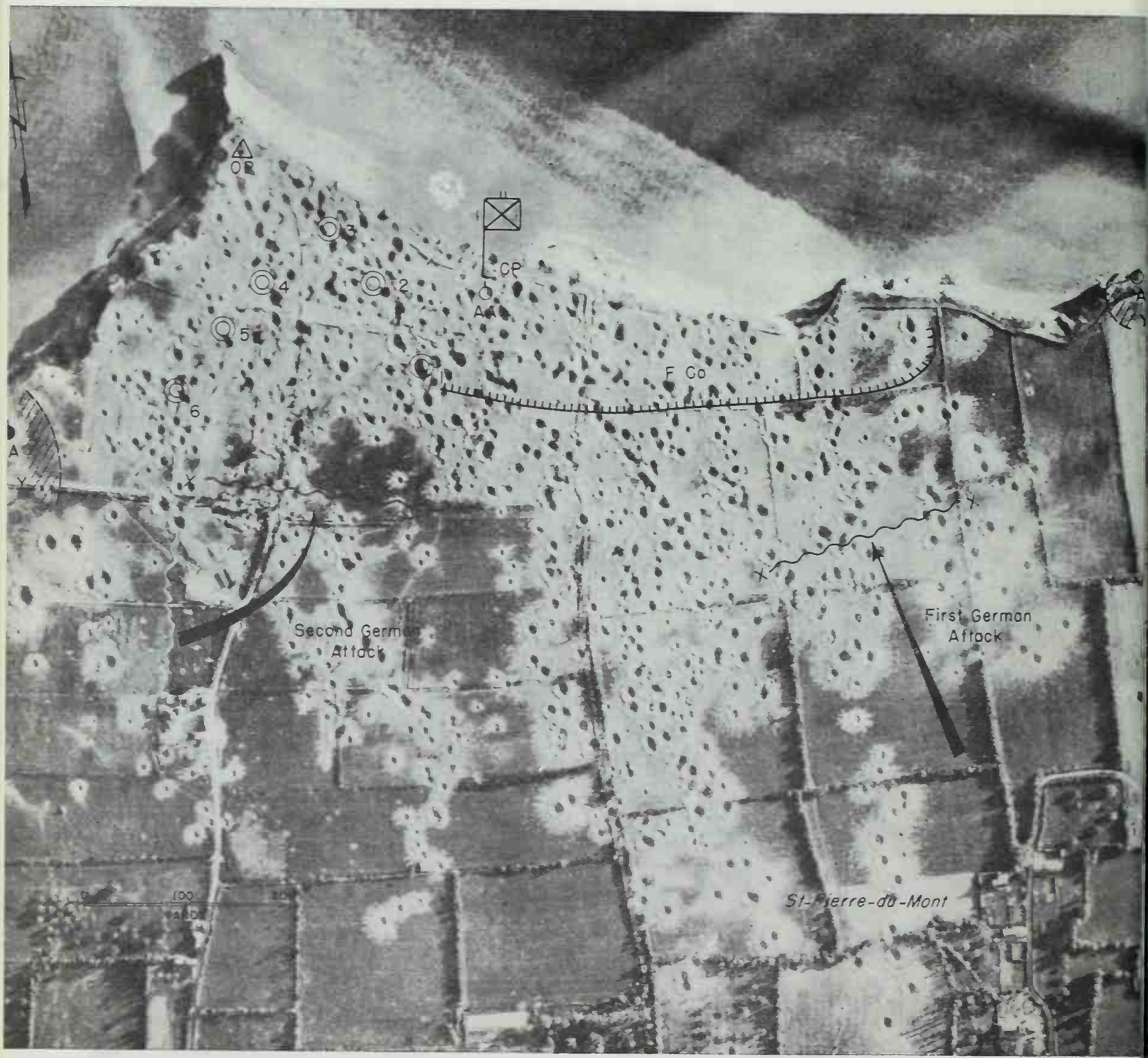
[1] The *Satterlee*, in its report, placed special emphasis on the excellence of its communication with the shore party, and the effectiveness of the system of fire control. The NSFCP had been on board the destroyer and worked with it in several drills and an exercise, before D Day.



the SOI had been changed just before D Day without notification to Colonel Rudder's communications section; though Lieutenant Eikner more than once contacted friendly units ashore at the main landing beaches, he was unable to get any answers or to stay in touch. He attributed this to his inability to give proper authentication to his messages. Colonel Rudder thus was in complete ignorance of the progress of the great assault at Omaha Beach, for the naval vessels, if they had any information, did not send it to the Point. Between noon and 1300 Colonel Rudder sent out a message by all available means, SCR 300, SCR 284 (through the *Satterlee*), and pigeon: "Located Pointe du Hoe—mission accomplished—need ammunition and reinforcements—many casualties." By 1500 the 116th Infantry replied, stating its inability to decipher the message, which was repeated. About the same time, the destroyer relayed in reply a brief message from the 1st Division commander, General Huebner: "No reinforcements available." The Rangers' noon message was the only word received from Pointe du Hoe on D Day by higher headquarters (V Corps had it by mid-afternoon), and was the cause for considerable anxiety as to the Rangers' situation.

The medical section with the Ranger assault force passed a busy morning. Capt. Walter E. Block and two of his enlisted personnel came in on LCA 722; three aid men were distributed in other craft. The aid men

AFTER RELIEF ON D + 2, *when American flag had been spread out to stop fire of friendly tanks coming from inland. Some German prisoners are being moved in after capture by the relieving forces.*




*MAP NO. 6—Afternoon Counterattacks*
*X—Area reached by German counterattacks.*
*Y—Enemy resistance areas.*

had pack carriers with 50 feet of rope coiled on top, so that if enemy fire made necessary a quick crossing of the beach the packs could be left behind and pulled over later. The two men with Captain Block carried aid kits, and Block himself lugged an 81-mm mortar shell case, waterproofed to serve as a container for medical supplies. All the equipment was got to the cliff base in good condition. When the CP moved to the top, Block

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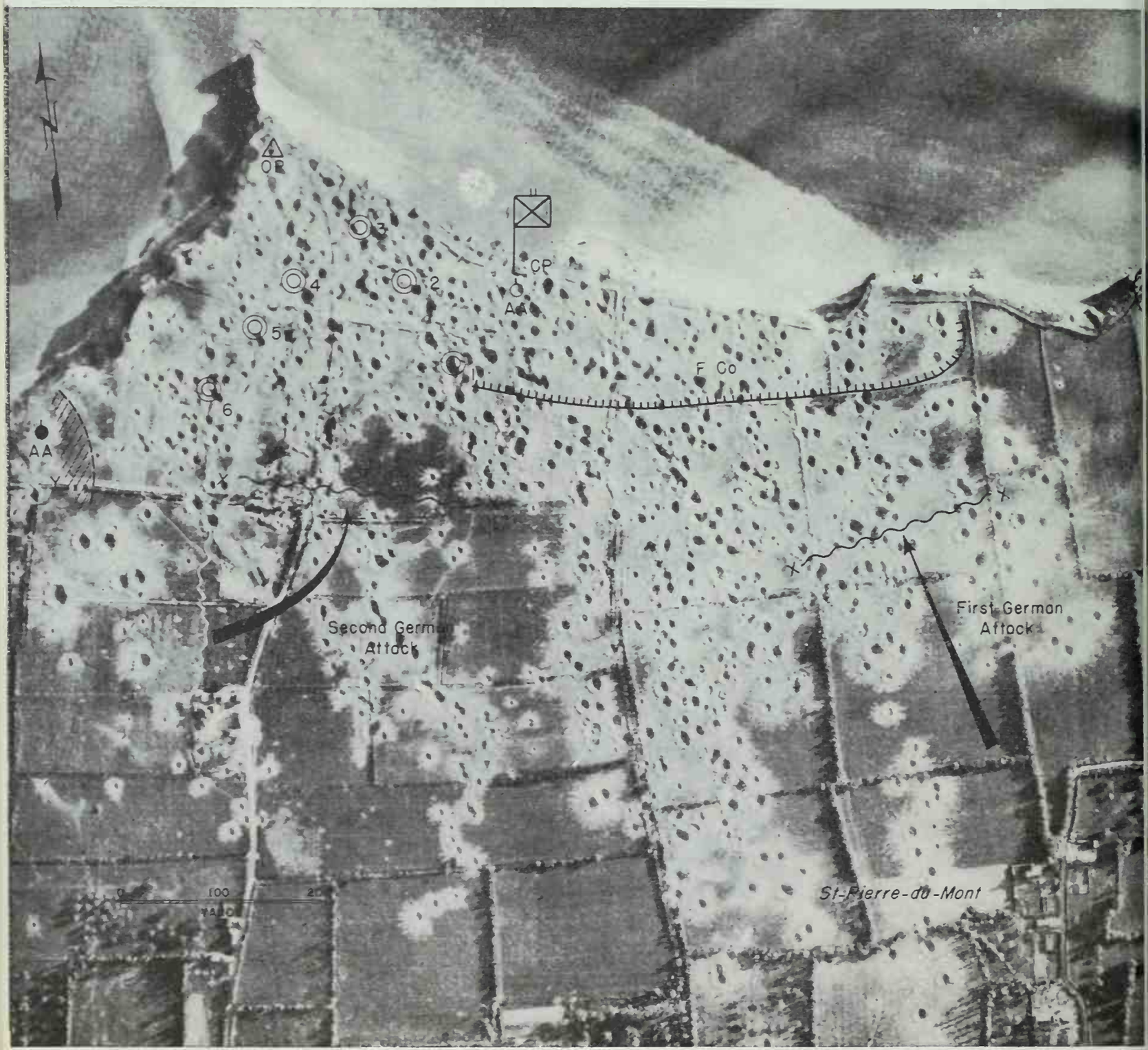


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left one man to care for some seriously wounded Rangers who could not be moved from the beach. Later in the morning one of the aid men and Lt. Col. Trevor, British Commando officer who had accompanied the assault, assembled sections of an extension ladder on the beach and got it mounted conveniently for service in moving wounded and getting supplies up the cliff.

Colonel Rudder and Captain Block were concerned over the problem of caring for the considerable number of wounded, many of whom needed to be evacuated. At 1350, by signal light communication, the destroyer *Barton* was asked to send in a boat to take off the casualties. At 1430, a small motor boat from the *Barton* made the attempt, towing a rubber boat astern. Enemy machine-gun fire from along the cliffs east of Pointe du Hoe harassed the *Barton's* motorboat, wounding one of the crew and preventing a landing. Block had to leave several of the seriously wounded Rangers overnight on the beach, in a cave at the base of the cliff.

### *Afternoon Counterattacks*

The Germans made two efforts against the Point during the afternoon, both of them hitting Lieutenant Wintz's force from south and west (Map No. 6, page 42).

The first attack came over the fields that stretched toward St-Pierre-du-Mont, where Lieutenant Wintz's Rangers spotted riflemen coming through the craters, with at least one machine-gun section. When the enemy reached the hedgerow one field south of Wintz's line, they set up the machine gun and started a fire fight that went on for an hour. Some artillery and mortar fire supported the effort, but most of the enemy shells went over into the Point area. Company F had a mortar in position, but it was short of ammunition and held its fire. They had no BAR's on the flank facing the attack, and naval fire could not be called on against the Germans so close to the Ranger lines. The attack was met and stopped by well-sustained rifle fire; after a time the German fire weakened and men could be seen drifting back. Wintz's force sustained no casualties.

The next German effort came shortly after 1600 and was much more dangerous. It hit the right end of Company F's thin line. Two BAR's as well as the mortar section were on this wing, but only a few riflemen, and the right flank (toward the antiaircraft position) was "in the air." Moving near the exit road, the Germans were close in on this flank before they were observed. S/Sgt. Herman E. Stein and Pfc. Cloise A. Manning were near gun position No. 1, changing craters after a close burst of enemy shells, when they saw a dozen Germans, with a machine gun, almost due west and moving fast toward the Point.[1] About the same time S/Sgt. Eugene E. Elder, at the mortar, spotted some enemy to the south, close by and crawling through craters. Sergeant Stein opened with surprise fire from his BAR at 40 yards, hit a couple of men in the group to the west, and scared the others into a short withdrawal.

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[1] From the positions indicated, it is probable this group came from the antiaircraft position to the west, rather than up the road. A wounded Ranger, left behind for dead after Masny's abortive morning attack on the antiaircraft position, saw Germans pass by from the west for an attack that (as he later reported) was stopped by mortar fire.

This check disorganized the attack for a few valuable moments; when the Germans rallied, their firing line extended well beyond Company F's flank, but their fire was high and wild. The few Rangers on that wing took hurried measures to meet the danger. Stein sent a message over to the mortar position, warning of the enemy's location, and eight riflemen came over from the left to help defend against any thrust behind Company F and onto the Point. With Sgt. Murrell F. Stinette observing and relaying corrections by call to Sergeant Elder, the Rangers' mortar opened at 60-yard range. The first shells burst right on the advance group of enemy, driving them out of their holes into a hasty withdrawal. Shifting its fire a little south, the mortar flushed another German party, who suffered casualties from the BAR's as they ran for cover.

That was the end of an attack that had got in very close to the Point and threatened to cut off Wintz's group. Quick reaction by the Rangers, and very rapid and accurate mortaring, had knocked the enemy off balance and given them no time to recover. A mortar in the attacking force was never used; their two machine guns were set up a few times, only to be chased into new cover by Sergeant Elder's mortar. Elder fired about 75 rounds during the action, all without increments, which had been wetted in landing. He found that the mortars could be used effectively at the short range, making the range changes accurately enough by calling for turns on the elevation and traversing handles.

Until darkness fell, there were occasional light skirmishes with German riflemen still in the fields beyond Lieutenant Wintz's position. The enemy seemed to be trying to feel out the Ranger strength on the east flank, but no more attacks developed. Toward nightfall, Lieutenant Wintz drew in his forces toward the Point to form a closer perimeter defense. The men were scattered through convenient shell holes, close enough to call to each other. Wintz took a patrol through the whole Point area, including the gun positions, to search out the snipers who were still appearing behind the perimeter. He failed to locate a single enemy.

The Company F men from LCA's 883 and 884, numbering originally about 40, had suffered casualties of 5 killed and 10 wounded during the day's fighting on and near the Point. Among the killed were Lieutenant Hill, who had gone out beyond the highway in the morning with the advance parties. (See page 30.) Toward afternoon, Hill started back to the Point, to report to the CP. On the way in, Lieutenant Hill and Private Bacho heard machine-gun fire in the fields east of the exit road and went over to investigate. About 300 yards away from the Company F line, they started across a hedgerow to get at a machine gun which Hill had spotted two fields over to the east. Bacho looked over the hedgerow and saw a dozen Germans lying on the open ground in a field corner, talking. Hill decided to grenade them. He and Bacho threw their first two over the hedge, then jumped into a ditch. The grenades misfired and stirred up a hornet's nest. The startled Germans began to throw their "potato-mashers"; one exploded harmlessly right between Hill and Bacho, but in the next instant Hill was shot through the chest by a machine-pistol bullet. Bacho threw

over his remaining grenades, including one with thermite charge which "seemed to confuse the enemy," and inflicted some casualties. When a rifle bullet went through the top of Bacho's helmet he decided to play dead. The Germans came up to the hedgerow and looked over, but concluded the Rangers were finished. Some time later Bacho was able to crawl away to a crater. He spent the afternoon in the general area through which the first German attacks were coming, but, though he heard shots fired around him, Bacho saw no Germans and had no idea that an enemy counterattack was under way. At dark, he was able to get back to the Point.

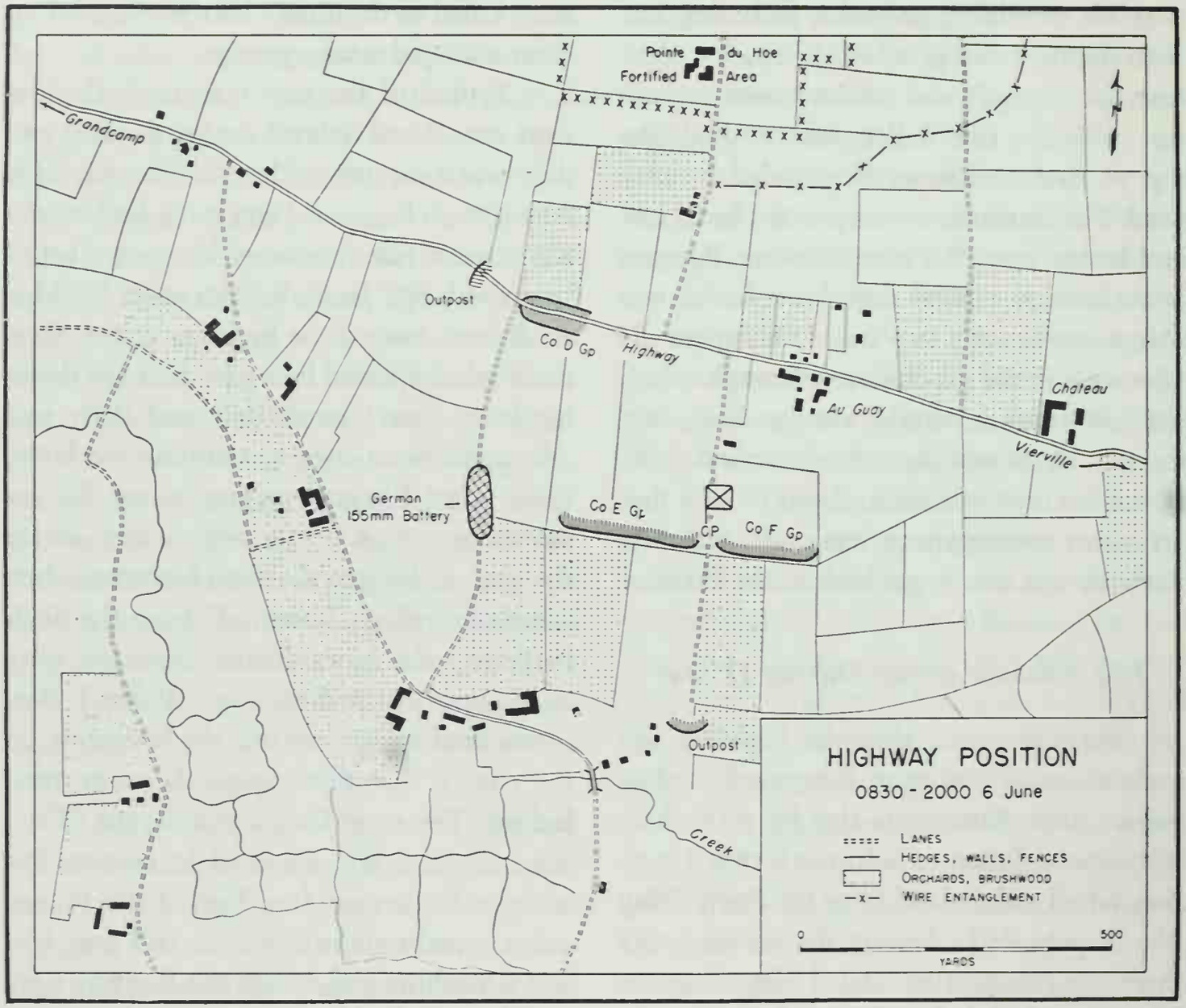
### *The Advance Group During D Day*

For some time after the highway was reached, small parties of Rangers drifted in to join their platoons, so that by noon there were over 60 men to hold the forward position, a half mile inland from the Point (Map No. 7, page 46). Among the arrivals were three paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division, scheduled to drop early that morning north of Carentan, 15 miles away, but dropped instead near Pointe du Hoe.

The main action of the day was vigorous and continued patrolling, undertaken by combat patrols of six or seven men who went out on the flanks of the highway position, and particularly to the south into the small valley. The patrols found no organized enemy positions and encountered no strong forces. A number of Germans who had evidently been bypassed near the Point and were trying to work south straggled into the Rangers' positions from the seaward side and were killed or captured. Patrols rounded up other scattered enemy groups.

Typical of the way men on both sides were cut off and isolated during the first two days was a capture within the Ranger lines. About noon Sergeant Petty came back to the CP to get a rifle for one of his men. Just as he arrived, Sgt. James R. Alexander fired his BAR back toward the highway at two Germans who appeared by a gate, halfway down the lane. One German fell, and Petty and Alexander went over to examine the body, three other Rangers tagging along for no particular reason. Petty was sitting astride the gate, looking at the dead German, when somebody yelled "Kamerad" from the ditch bordering the lane. Three Germans were coming out of the ditch. Sgt. Walter J. Borowski fired some shots into the hedgerow on the chance that there might be more men hiding. Two more Germans came out. Then the hedgerow was searched in earnest, but without further results. Two of the prisoners, a captain and a noncom, said they had had a machine gun, which the Rangers were unable to find. Altogether, about 40 prisoners were taken in by Ranger patrols and outposts, to be grouped under guard in the field near the CP.

Sergeant Petty also figured in a good deal of shooting that took place at the outpost south of the CP and near the creek. He and his nine men were well situated to watch movement across the valley. At intervals during the day small groups of enemy came into easy range, moving west along the country road toward Grandcamp. Perhaps fleeing from the Omaha area, these parties seemed to be disorganized, and put up no fight when




*MAP NO. 7*

Petty opened fire with his BAR. Using surprise fire, Petty inflicted some 30 casualties during the afternoon, including 2 of a party of 7 Poles, shot at before the Rangers realized they were coming forward to surrender.

Patrols found evidence late in the day that the Germans were present in some strength south and southwest of the Rangers' highway positions, but there was no sign of preparation for counterattack. The nearest approach to trouble came north of the highway, near Company D's roadblock. About 1600 Sergeant Lomell, near his CP hole where the highway was joined by the lane containing the German battery, happened to glance over the 5-foot stone wall edging the highway and saw a German force of about 50 men coming through an orchard from the direction of the Point. The enemy was moving in well-organized fashion, with scouts out ahead, and Lomell could see two machine-gun sections and a mortar. There

was no time to make any preparation, or even to pass word down the Ranger line. Lomell could only hope that the enemy would pass by and that his own men would have the sense to hold their fire, for the 20 Rangers of Company D, scattered along 150 yards of highway, would have had little chance against a force this size. But the Germans were not attacking, nor, as their course soon made clear, were they aware of the Rangers' position. About 30 feet from the wall the column turned westward and moved parallel to the highway beyond the roadblock position, then south across the blacktop and out of sight. Showing excellent control, the Rangers had made no move that would betray their location.

Intermittent harassing fire fell near the Rangers during the day, but the air and tree bursts caused only one casualty, a paratrooper who got tired of ducking into his fox hole and was hit by the next shell. From the sea,

ORCHARD SOUTH OF RANGERS' POSITION, *looking toward the small valley. Sgt. Petty's BAR outpost was in position near here to interdict enemy movement along the valley during daylight.*

friendly destroyer fire was being directed from the Point at inland targets. Occasionally rounds fell short or uncomfortably close; little could be done about this as communication from the forward group to the Point depended on runners and patrols, and no member of the Naval Shore Fire Control Party was available for the highway group. Men going back to the Point were nearly always engaged by snipers, and sometimes had to fight their way on both trips as German resistance revived near the Point. Lieutenant Lapres twice went back to Colonel Rudder's CP, getting ammunition and, on one trip, a radio which failed to work. On his morning passage, Lapres drew heavy fire from west of the exit road; his attempts in the afternoon were entirely blocked off by Germans who had infiltrated between the two Ranger Groups.[1]

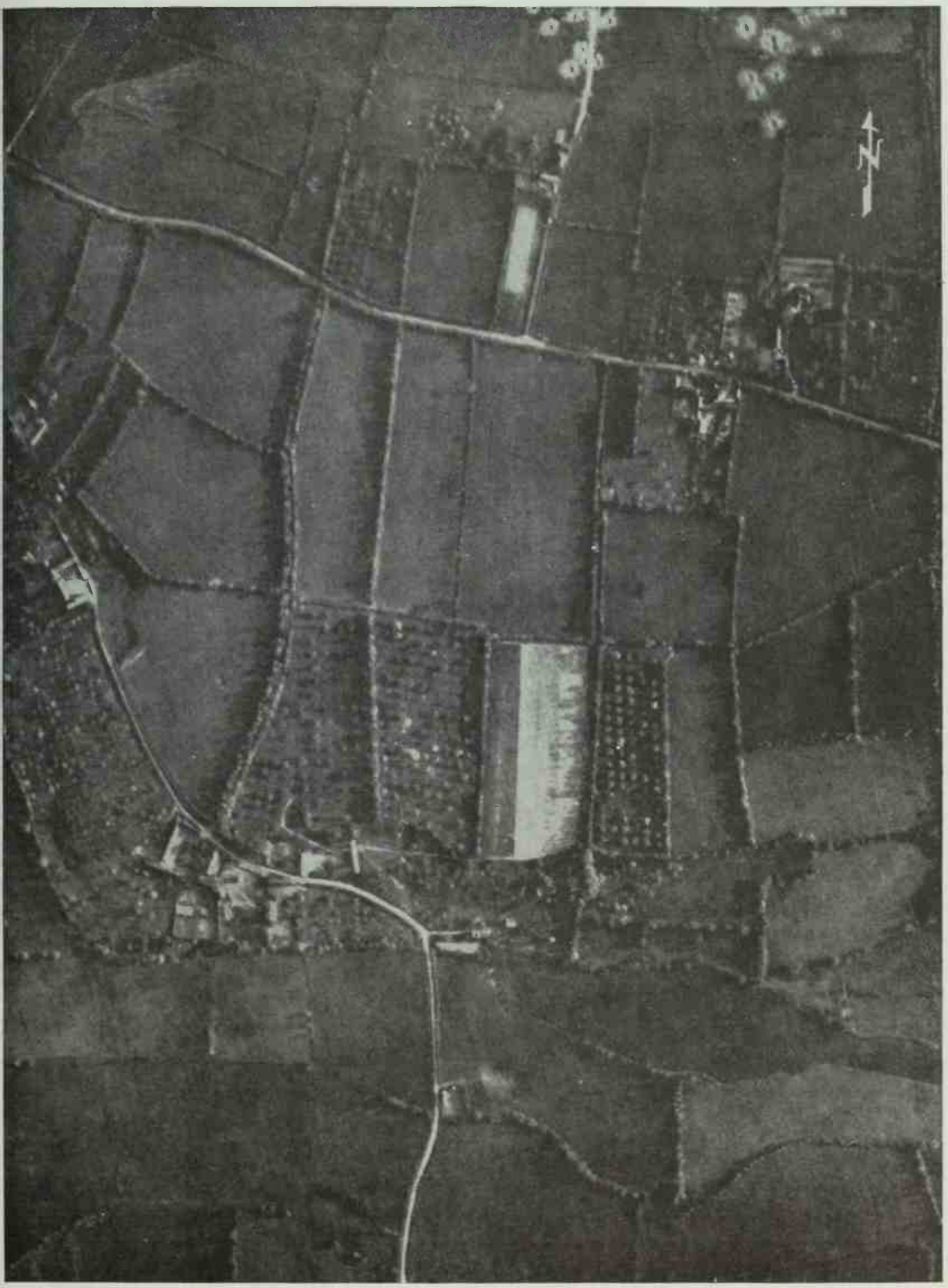
About 2100, still two hours before dark, a party of 23 men from Company A, 5th Ranger Battalion came into the Ranger lines from the east. Led by 1st Lt. Charles H. Parker, Jr., this force was the 1st Platoon of Company A. The record of its fight from Omaha Beach to the Point is one of the sagas of D Day. Parker's platoon became separated from the 5th Ranger Battalion during the first penetration of the German beach defenses between Vierville and St-Laurent, about 0815. Unaware that the battalion had become involved in a fire fight just inland from the beach, the platoon had made its way south of Vierville to the battalion assembly area. Finding no friendly troops there, Parker concluded they must have preceded him and set out west. After fighting two hot actions, one of which netted a score of prisoners, while the other nearly trapped his platoon, Parker got cross country all the way to St-Pierre-du-Mont and walked into the 2d Ranger position at the highway. He was surprised to learn that the 5th Rangers had not arrived, but was sure they must be close behind him on another route. A patrol was sent in at once to Colonel Rudder with this heartening news. Parker's men stayed with the forward group at the highway as they prepared their night defenses.

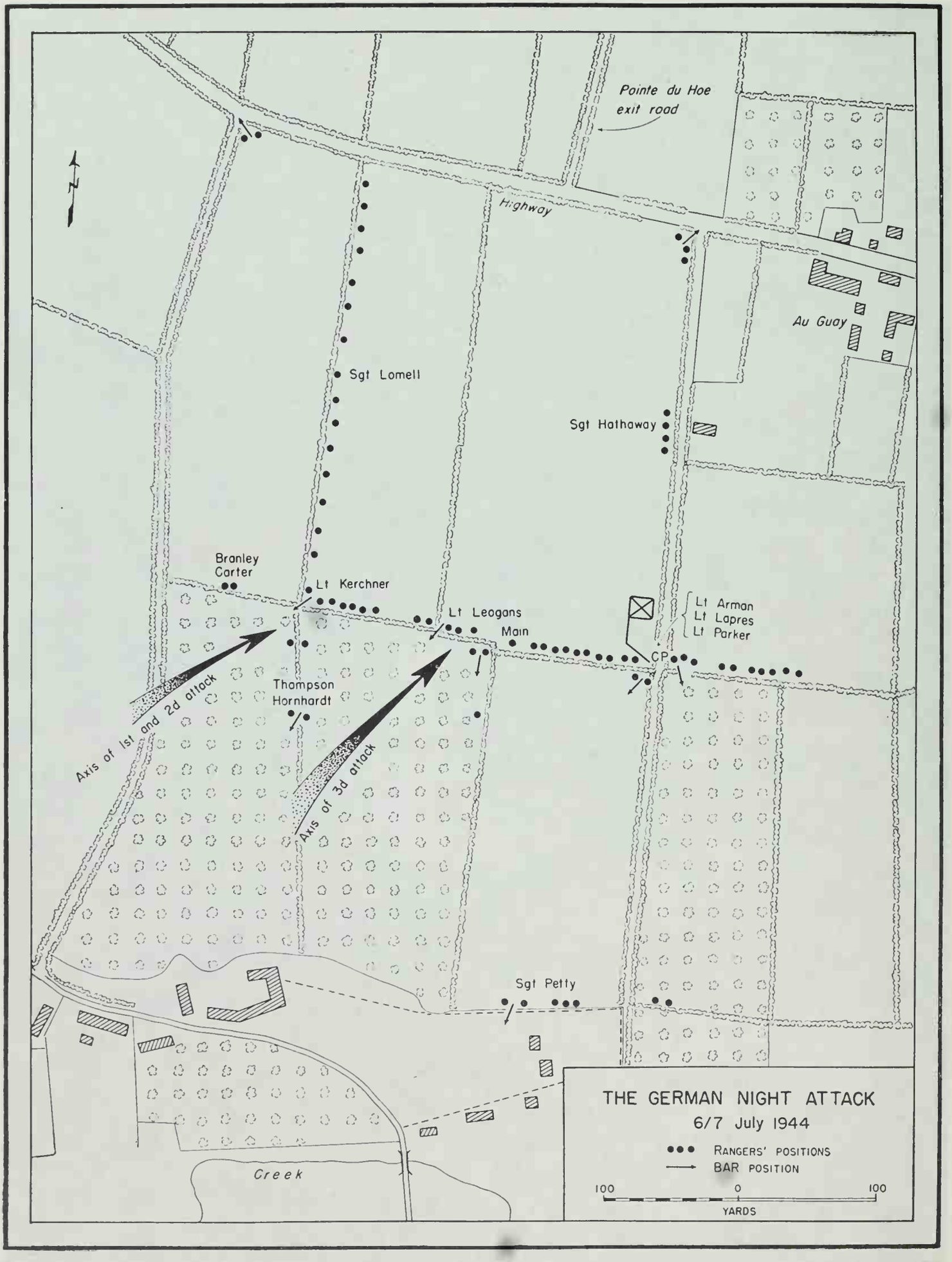
### *The German Night Attack: First Phase*

Twilight in early June, on reckoning by British War Time, lasted until 2300. As night approached, and still no word came from Omaha Beach, Colonel Rudder faced a difficult command decision with regard to disposition of his limited forces. Of his original 200 men over a third were casualties, though many of the lightly wounded (including Colonel Rudder) were staying in action. Ammunition was low, especially in grenades and mortar shells. The Germans were still holding the antiaircraft position close to the Point on the west, and had shown themselves in some force on the eastern flank as well. Communications between the Point and the highway group had always been precarious, and the latter force, numbering more than half of the Rangers, would be particularly exposed to counterattack that

AREA OF HIGHWAY POSITIONS *(photo taken May 1944).*

[1] Probably during the period of counterattacks.




Pointe du Hoe
exit road
Highway
Au Guay
Sgt Lomell
Sgt Hathaway
Branley
Carter
Lt Kerchner
Lt Leogans
Main
Lt Arman
Lt Lapres
Lt Parker
CP
Thompson
Hornhardt
Axis of 1st and 2d attack
Axis of 3d attack
Sgt Petty
Creek
THE GERMAN NIGHT ATTACK
6/7 July 1944
RANGERS' POSITIONS
BAR POSITION
100
0
100
YARDS

*MAP NO. 8*

might cut it off from the shore. Either of the two Ranger positions was in danger; Colonel Trevor, the Commando officer, remarked casually in the CP that "never have I been so convinced of anything as that I will be either a prisoner of war or a casualty by morning."

Colonel Rudder decided to leave the highway force in place. He was still expecting the arrival of the 5th Rangers and 116th Infantry units along the Vierville road, carrying out the D-Day program, and this expectation had been strengthened when Colonel Rudder heard that Parker's platoon had actually arrived, reporting (erroneously) that the rest of the 5th Rangers were probably just behind them. It was important, Colonel Rudder thought, to maintain the block on the Grandcamp highway and so deny that vital road to the enemy. Even though German resistance had stiffened during the day, their counterattacks against the weaker force on the Point had been ineffective, and they had made no efforts against the highway position. As a final consideration, Colonel Rudder and his staff had very strong fears (proved by the next day's experience to be unfounded) of the danger from German artillery if his force were concentrated in a restricted area at the Point. Lieutenant Lapres, who had reached the Point with a patrol just before dark, went back inland with orders to hold the position.

Out beyond the highway, the Rangers made a few alterations in their positions to get ready for night defense (Map No. 8, page 50). The main indications of enemy strength were to the south and west, and the greater number of the 85 men at hand (including Lieutenant Parker's platoon of 5th Rangers) were disposed to guard against attacks from those quarters.

The day positions of Company D were obviously too extended for safety, and its 20 men were drawn in to form the right flank of the main Ranger position, on a hedgerow that ran south from the highway to Company E's fox holes. Lieutenant Kerchner and a BAR man were at the angle formed by intersecting hedgerows where E and D joined; Sergeant Lomell was near the center of D's line. Two men were put out west of Kerchner's post, about half way to the lane bordering the next field. Another outpost of two Rangers, one with a BAR, was in the angle where that lane met the blacktop. The rest of Kerchner's men were strung out at wide intervals along the 300 yards of hedgerow, in a ditch running along the embankment.

Company E's 30 men held their day positions on the hedgeline running east toward the main CP. Some half dozen of the 5th Ranger men were distributed along their front. A few yards south of the angle where E and D connected, two riflemen were posted in the orchard that sloped away gently toward the creek; two more Rangers, one a BAR man, were 75 yards further out. The post of Lieutenant Leagans (2d Platoon) was in a German-prepared dugout near the middle of E's hedgerow, with a BAR man and a rifleman in the corner of the orchard on the other side of the hedgerow, and another rifleman 50 yards south on the boundary between the orchard and a wheatfield. A third BAR man was 20 yards west of Leagans' station. Between Leagans and the

angle where Company D's line began, about 10 riflemen occupied fox holes north of the hedge, one group fairly close to the angle and the rest bunched near Leagans, an arrangement thought better for purposes of communication. From east of Leagans' post over to the main CP on the lane, the 1st Platoon of Company E and some 5th Rangers continued the hedgerow line, with main strength near the CP, where the Rangers were placed two to a fox hole for greater safety in night fighting. Sergeant Robey with a BAR was in the corner of the wheatfield just south of the CP, with a good field of fire to the southwest. In addition to their own four BAR's, Company E platoons had found and set up three German machine guns (two model '34's and one '42), for which ammunition was available.

East from the CP, the line that Company F had held in daylight was shortened to 100 yards. Near the lane that ran back from CP to highway, three Rangers with a BAR were placed in a trench that gave them a field of fire through a gateway into the orchard southeast of the CP. Beyond them were two men of Company F and some 5th Battalion Rangers. Sergeant Petty and seven men, including some 5th Rangers, still held an outpost along the stone wall at the foot of the wheatfield. Their advantages of observation from this position would be sharply reduced at night, and Petty was under orders to withdraw if an attack developed in his vicinity.

The main Ranger position thus formed a right angle, facing southwest, with equal sides about 300 yards long on two fields that ran back to the highway. The 30 or 40 German prisoners were put in fox holes in these fields, not far from the CP, and two Rangers were regarded as sufficient guard. Little concern was felt for the open flank to the east, protected by three men with a BAR near the highway, and by a half dozen of Parker's 5th Rangers along the lane between the CP and the road.

Certain features of the night arrangements are worth noting, in view of later developments. The 5th Ranger platoon of 23 men had been scattered in small batches at various points and did not operate as a tactical unit under Lieutenant Parker. He and his assistant, 1st Lt. Stanley D. Zelepsky, were at the main CP with Arman and Lapres. Command functions in the Ranger force, made up of elements of four companies, were not centralized. During the day, the D, E, and F parties had cooperated on a more or less informal basis, with coordination secured by consultation of the four officers, Lieutenants Kerchner (D), Leagans and Lapres (E), and Arman (F). When plans had to be made in the morning as to positions for the day, Lieutenant Arman was the senior officer at hand and seems to have made the decisions. After that he did not consider himself in command in any formal sense. The decision to shorten up and tighten the defenses for the night was taken when Lieutenant Kerchner came over to Arman's post and reported seeing Germans in some strength to the southwest. Arman, Lapres, and Kerchner talked it over and agreed as to readjustment of positions.

As they settled in for night defense, the main worry of the Rangers was their ammunition supply, now running short, espe-

TYPICAL NORMAN ORCHARD. *This one was on the south edge of the 2d Rangers' position, the night of 6 June, near coastal highway. Germans approaching the position through the orchard were able to get close before they were spotted. (Photo taken June 1945.)*

cially for the BAR's. Very few U.S. grenades were left; although a plentiful supply of German "potato-mashers" were found in prepared positions around the CP, the Rangers had a poor opinion of their effectiveness. A few Rangers had lost their rifles and were using German weapons, for which ammunition was in good supply. Companies D and E had three Tommy guns each, and E had three German machine guns. The Rangers

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had had nothing to eat since leaving ship except the individual D-bars, but in the excitement and activity of the day few men had felt the need for food.

Even before Lieutenant Kerchner's report, the officers had felt particularly apprehensive about the area southwest of their angle position. At the bottom of the little valley to the south, a country road ran more or less parallel to the Ranger lines, west from a bridge close by Sergeant Petty's outpost and then northwest toward the highway. From their higher ground, the Rangers could watch this road during daylight, but at night it was too far away for good observation. Houses, hedgerows, and orchards along it would give cover for assembly of troops. It was in this area, a few hundred yards southwest of the angle in the Rangers' right position, that Lieutenant Kerchner had observed German activity at dusk.

Despite a moon nearly full and only partly obscured by clouds, the Rangers found visibility poor in front of their angle, particularly into the orchards on the south. Here the ground sloped off 30 feet in 300 yards, and the fields of fire had been good for a daylight action.

About 2330 the Rangers posted in front of the D-E corner were startled by a general outburst of whistles and shouts, close by on the orchard slope. Enemy fire opened immediately and in considerable volume. Sgt. Michael J. Branley and Pfc. Robert D. Carty, in position west of the corner, saw tracer fire from a machine gun to their right and only 25 yards from Company D's side of the angle. South of the corner, in Company E's outpost, the men spotted another machine gun to the west, about 50 yards from Company E's defensive line. Neither outpost had seen or heard the enemy approach through the orchard. At the angle, and along E's front, the Rangers returned the enemy fire at once, the BAR's firing in full bursts. Carty and Branley started back toward the corner to get better firing positions; Carty was killed by a grenade, and his companion, hit in the shoulder by a bullet, managed to crawl to the hedgerow.

In the Company E outpost, Corporal Thompson and Hornhardt were almost walked over by a group of Germans who came suddenly around a hump in the north–south hedgerow dividing the orchard. Thompson saw their silhouettes against the sky, so the Rangers got in their fire first at point-blank range and knocked down three of the enemy. The others went flat and threw grenades, one of them exploding in Thompson's face and cutting him badly. He gave his BAR to Hornhardt and they started back for the corner.

Only a few minutes after the firing began, an immense sheet of flame shot up over to the west, near the position of the abandoned German guns. (The Rangers' guess was that, somehow, more powder charges had been set off in the ammunition dump.) The orchard slopes were fully lit up, and many Germans could be seen outlined against the glare. The flare died almost at once, and the firing ended at the same time. It is possible that the powder explosion had disconcerted the Germans and ended their effort, but more probably the attack was only a preliminary probe by combat patrols, trying to locate Ranger positions by drawing their fire.

This brief action brought about a few changes in the Ranger positions, affecting the outposts and the west side of the angle (Company D). Certain things that happened began to show some of the difficulties of night fighting. Thompson and Hornhardt got back to the corner and found nobody at that position; when they called for Sergeant Rupinski there was no answer. (He was 20 yards away, to the east, but did not hear them; there were two Company D men close by with a BAR, but Thompson missed seeing them too.) The outpost pair decided everybody must have pulled back across the field, so they started north along Company D's hedgerow and finally encountered Rangers in position near the highway end of the hedgerow. (They had passed others on the way without spotting them in their holes under the hedgerow.)

Lieutenant Kerchner and Sgt. Harry J. Fate were now at this end of the Company D line. When the firing began, with greatest concentration near Kerchner's post at the angle, he had the impression that the attack was going to roll right over them. So he and Fate went north along the hedgerow; as they started, Kerchner told Fate his plan. He would collect the D platoon near the highway, circle west and then south, and hit the German attack in the flank. Kerchner called to his men to follow as he ran along the hedgerow, but in the general uproar of the fire they failed to hear him. On reaching the highway he found only two men had joined up; the fire fight was already dying out, and the plan for a counterattack was given up. Lieutenant Kerchner decided to stay near the highway.

The net result of these shifts was to weaken the angle position toward which the German attack had come. Both outposts to south of it had come in, the two 5th Ranger men appearing at the main CP and telling Lieutenant Arman that they had been ordered to withdraw. (There is no way of tracing whether, why, or by whom such an order was given.) Two Rangers who had been near the angle were casualties; six others, including a BAR man and the only officer at that sector (Kerchner), had gone to other parts of the line. No information on these changes in strength at the angle seems to have reached Lieutenant Arman's CP. Neither Lieutenant Kerchner on D's thinly held front, nor (apparently) Lieutenant Leagans in Company E made any move to strengthen the corner position. So far as can be determined no one visited the corner to see what the situation was.

On the east wing of the Rangers' position there had been no firing. Neither the first platoon of E (Lieutenant Lapres) nor the Company F men had been involved so far. Down near the creek, in Sergeant Petty's exposed outpost, the men were alarmed by the fire but couldn't locate it; they thought it was back near the highway, and some even believed it was the 116th pushing along the blacktop to relieve the Rangers at the Point. Petty, a little after the skirmish ended and quiet had settled down again, heard "clinking" sounds over toward the farm buildings west of his post. He put it down to noise made by farm animals. But after another short spell of quiet, a machine gun opened up from that flank, some of the shots ricocheting off a farm roller which Petty had placed

against the stone wall for cover to his right. Petty's men stayed quiet, and after two short bursts the enemy fire stopped. Petty decided, in accordance with earlier instructions, that he should pull back up the slope to the CP. His group made the trip without drawing enemy fire. Petty with his BAR and Dix with a machine gun reinforced the CP position, while the rest of his men were put on the Company F line farther east.

At the CP, where Lieutenant Arman was stationed and to which other officers came occasionally, everything was quiet. After the fire fight ended, one or two Rangers from E's line reported in, and Lieutenant Lapres went over to the west to see what had happened. Two noncoms went along the E front to see if there were any casualties and if weapons were working properly. They passed word to expect more attacks. Lieutenant Arman was not informed in any detail of Company E's situation, and knew nothing about D. As far as Company F was concerned, he thought for a time of moving it south toward the creek, to bring flanking fire on any further German attack toward the angle, but decided against this idea because of the danger of firing on friendly positions. The group of German prisoners near the CP was moved farther out, into the middle of the field, and ordered to dig in for their own protection.

### *Night Attack: Second Phase*

About 0100 the Germans came in with a stronger effort, hitting again from the south and southwest against the right of Company E's line. Once again, the Germans had got through the fields and orchard to within 50 yards of the Rangers without being spotted. The attack opened with whistles, followed by what seemed to be shouting of names up and down the front—a sort of "roll call." (Some Rangers believed the Germans were locating their men in relation to each other for beginning the assault, but the general view was that the enemy was trying to scare the defense.) The shouting was followed immediately by heavy firing, including machine guns and machine pistols. Much of the fire was tracer, somewhat high and inaccurate, designed for moral effect, but ball ammunition was spraying the hedgerow eastward from the angle. Wild mortar fire was put into the field behind the hedgerow, and some Rangers reported the enemy threw in a few mortar shells by hand. The Germans also used grenades.

Beyond this general characterization of the attack, the survivors' recollections of this action are confused and hard to fit into any clear pattern. Lieutenant Arman, at the CP to the east of the main fighting, had the impression of two distinct stages in the attack: first, a period of intense but wild fire; then, after a short pause, another burst of whistles and shouts followed by an assault. The main weight of the attack certainly came near the angle in the Rangers' lines, but—and this is a measure of the lack of communications during this night action—nobody knew then, or was sure later, what happened at the corner position. Of the survivors interviewed, Tech. 5 John S. Burnett was about 25 yards east of the angle and Branley (wounded) had crawled about 30 yards north of it, along Company D's hedgerow. Branley reports

hearing Tech. 5 Henry S. Stecki's BAR open up from the corner (other Rangers, farther away, confirm this) and fire almost continuously for about two minutes. Then grenades exploded near the corner; after a short lull, the BAR fired again, there were some more grenades, and then Germans could be heard talking near the position.

Burnett at first made the same report, pointing to the conclusion that the Germans had occupied the corner. Later, he changed his story and insisted that the Ranger's BAR (Stecki) was still in action after the second German attack. Lieutenant Zelepsky (5th Ranger officer at Arman's CP) remembers being told that the enemy had broken into the Ranger lines, and recalls the impression of men at the CP that the angle was lost and the Germans were in the field. Lieutenant Arman has the same recollection, and thinks the BAR fire at the corner was not heard after the opening of the second attack. The weight of the evidence, pending information from Rangers who were later taken prisoner, suggests that the enemy had captured the angle, held only by a BAR man and one rifleman.

It is much more clear that, whatever happened at the angle, nobody at any distance north or east of that position knew, after the attack, just what the situation was. North of the corner, Company D's men (who had so far not taken part in the fire fight) lay quiet and did not investigate. Twenty-five yards eastward, Burnett and Sergeant Rupinski made no move to find out what had taken place. Over at the main CP, Lieutenant Lapres and Lieutenant Arman had agreed that Company D's hedgerow was overrun; they were discussing plans for withdrawal if the Germans made another attack. They had no communication with Company D, and did not try to send it word of their plan. The officers of the 5th Ranger platoon (Parker and Zelepsky) were supposedly told of the plan, but they do not recall hearing about it before it was carried out.

Near the middle of Company E's line; a Ranger remembers that word was passed down the line to avoid wild firing. Ammunition was running low.

### *Night Attack: Finale*

The third German attack came at some time near 0300. In general character, this one developed like the second: the same whistles and roll calling to start with, then heavy and inaccurate fire, involving several machine guns and burp guns which sprayed the hedgerow and the fields beyond. Mortar fire, somewhat increased in volume, was falling in the area where the prisoners were grouped.

This time the enemy pressure extended farther east, reaching into the wheatfield south of the CP. From different accounts, machine guns were spotted in the orchard below the 2d Platoon of E and also directly south of the CP. An officer at the CP had the impression that machine-gun fire also came from the field inside the Rangers' positions, near the angle. This observation fits the theory that the Germans had captured the angle earlier, but the report might be based on high fire from a gun west of the angle, in the orchard where one was spotted in the first attack. The only certainty is that there was a great deal of fire, much of it indirect, and

that it had the result of confusing the defense; some Rangers even believed that the enemy were in the rear of their position, near the blacktop.

Lieutenant Arman reports that (as in the second attack) the preliminary burst of shooting was followed by a brief pause, preceding the real assault. Whatever the sequence, the western half of Company E's line was overrun in a short time after the attack began. Only a few incidents of the action can be recovered from survivors who were in or near that area. There is enough evidence to suggest that, even if the angle had been taken earlier, the main penetration now came near the middle of E's hedgerow and rolled up the Ranger positions west from there to the angle.

One fox hole east of Lieutenant Leagans' post at the junction of the two platoons, Pfc. Harold D. Main (who had been wounded by a grenade) heard the Germans coming up close in the wheat just beyond the hedgerow. After a pause following the heavy opening fire, they rushed the hedgerow to Main's right, and Crook's BAR went silent. Minutes later, Main could hear Germans talking on his side of the hedge and knew what had happened. He crawled under the thick tangle of vines and briars into the middle of the hedgerow. Hidden there, he heard S/Sgt. Curtis A. Simmons surrender, only 15 feet away, but the Germans came no farther east.

Burnett, still in his fox hole 25 yards east of the corner, confirms the impression that the decisive action was not on his right, toward the angle, but left, toward Lieutenant Leagans' post. Near Burnett the Germans had worked through the orchard close to the Rangers, and their automatic fire ripped through the hedgerow, keeping the defenders down. The Rangers had plenty of German grenades and used them freely in a close-range exchange. To Burnett, the fight seemed to go on an hour (it can only have been minutes). He became aware that Sergeant Boggetto's BAR, to the left, had stopped firing; then a burst of German fire began to sweep along the Ranger side of the hedge, coming from the east and enfilading the 2d Platoon's fox holes. Burnett and the man next to him were wounded. The enemy had evidently broken into the field to their left. Burnett could also spot them to his right in the angle. He heard Sergeant Rupinski arguing with a few Rangers, trying to decide whether they could fight it out. The talk ended by Rupinski shouting "Kamerad." The Germans moved in and rounded up the survivors, many of them wounded, including Burnett. Lieutenant Leagans was dead. About 20 Rangers were taken off the field, nearly all from Leagans' platoon of E, and moved to a German CP a mile to the south. Here, Burnett[1] saw a force, estimated at a company, coming by the CP from the south, and judged the post was a battalion CP because of the presence nearby of an aid station.

From the varied and sometimes irreconcilable stories of the Rangers who were near Lieutenant Arman's CP, one gets a fair reflection of the confusion that existed under the difficulties of this last phase in a night battle. Arman reports that after the opening fire he, Lapres, and the 5th Ranger officers

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[1] Burnett escaped a few days later by killing a guard, was helped by the French Underground, and succeeded in getting back to the Allied lines after they reached Rouen in August.

went ahead with the plan to withdraw, already agreed on. Arman had no idea whether Leagans of Company D knew the plan. According to Lieutenant Zelepsky (5th Rangers), there was little or no prearranged plan: men began to come in from E's line to the west, reporting the Germans had broken the position, and the report was confirmed by enemy fire that seemed to come from the field inside the angle. This led to a hasty decision to withdraw. Sgt. Lawrence Lare remembers a man running across the field from the west to report that Company D was wiped out. Smith and Tech. 5 Charles H. Dunlap, who had been near Main's fox hole, came in to the CP (because their guns had jammed) to report that there were no Rangers left between their former position and the CP. Some of the 5th Ranger men who had been in the Company E line later said that the 2d Rangers "pulled out and left them there."

According to plan or not, a withdrawal took place from the CP area. Just before it started, that wing of the Ranger line saw some action for the first time that night. Following the first burst of German fire, which indicated the enemy were now south of the CP in the wheatfield, some more Rangers were put into the northeast corner of that field to strengthen the group already there. The reinforcements included Sergeant Petty with his BAR, S/Sgt. Frederick A. Dix with a German machine gun, and some Company F riflemen. A German party came eastward crossing the upper end of the wheatfield; they were starting through the hedgerow embankment into the lane when Dix saw them only a few feet away from his post in the lane. He turned around to use the captured machine gun. It jammed on the first round, and a rifle bullet from some Ranger firing down the lane behind Dix hit a glancing blow on his helmet, stunning him. Recovering, and starting to crawl along the hedgerow ditch back to the CP, Dix heard Petty yell "Down!" just before opening with his BAR on Germans coming up the lane. Sergeant Robey's BAR joined in, and this fire broke up the only attack that came close to the CP. One German was caught crawling along the hedgerow into the CP area, and was killed by a grenade that landed directly under his chest. Plenty of fire was coming across the wheatfield from the west, but no assault was tried from that quarter.

As the volume of enemy fire built up again from south and west, indicating a new rush was at hand, hasty and informal measures were taken to pass the word around for withdrawal back to the highway and the Point. Some Rangers failed to get the notice and were temporarily left behind. Petty and Robey were told to bring up the rear and cover the withdrawal with their BAR's. Noncommissioned officers tried hurriedly to round up their men. Once started, movement was fast. S/Sgt. Richard N. Hathaway of the 5th Rangers had been posted halfway back to the highway, along the lane. His first notice of what was happening came when men ran by toward the north. Hathaway stuck his head through the hedgerow and shouted "Hey! What's up? Where you going?" The nearest man stopped running, put his rifle in Hathaway's face, and demanded the password. Hathaway was so rattled that he could just remember the word in time. Told "the Germans are right be-

HEDGEROWS *such as this one enabled Rangers left behind after the night attack to hide until relieving forces reached the area on D + 2. This photo, taken June 1945, shows the lane that leaves highway just east of Au Guay and runs toward the cliffs.*

hind us—get out quick to the Point!" he collected part of his group (he couldn't find some, but they came in later), and went north. There could be no question of bringing back the prisoners.

As the parties arrived at the blacktop, there was no sign of any pursuit, and an effort was made to reorganize those Rangers at hand and to see that none were left. A hasty check-up showed that the Company F men were nearly all there, but only a scattering of E and none from D. Lieutenant Arman figured that the Germans might have infiltrated between the highway and the Point, so sent one party over to the east and then into the Point across fields. Lieutenant Arman and a second party, including some of Company E, went back by the exit road. The 5th Ranger men made their way through the completely unfamiliar terrain in scattered parties (and were afterward resentful of their having been cast adrift, though what hap-

pened was probably inevitable under the circumstances of night withdrawal). All told, about 50 men got back to the Point, shortly after 0400, and were put at once into an improvised defensive line from gun position No. 5 to gun position No. 3. Very little could be done to organize the position before daylight.

Colonel Rudder was told that the rest of the force had been destroyed. "Neutralized" would have been a more exact word. All Company E Rangers from Main's fox hole to the angle had been killed or captured, and a few men of D near the corner had been included in the disaster. But from about 30 yards north of the angle and on to the highway, the rest of D's contingent (some dozen men) were still in their original positions, scattered along 250 yards of hedgerow. They had no notice of a withdrawal. When they realized it was under way, they had no chance to move, with Germans in the fields to their rear and flanks. Daylight was near, and the 12 men stayed in the deep drainage ditch, overhung with the heavy vegetation of the hedgerow. They had delivered no fire during the attacks and could only hope the Germans had not spotted their positions.

PREPARING TO LEAVE THE POINT ON D + 2. *The relief accomplished, 2d Rangers joined in drive toward Grandcamp. Col. Rudder (arrow) had been wounded 3 times, but accompanied his force.*

MEN OF 2D AND 5TH RANGERS *at a religious service held in a Norman hedgerow field by the chaplain of Ranger Force.*

On the east–west hedgerow, between the breakthrough area and the CP, three more Rangers had been left behind in the confusion of withdrawal. Main was one. Another was Tech. 5 Earl Theobold, who had been in the field guarding prisoners. During the final attack he came over to the hedgerow near Main "to help out." He could find no Rangers, and soon heard German voices near the CP, so he hid in the ditch. Pfc. Loring L. Wadsworth, in the same sector and about 75 yards from Main, had missed the word of withdrawal. When he finally called to his nearest neighbor, who had been only a few yards off, Wadsworth got no answer, and stayed put under a tangle of briars.

Both Theobold and Wadsworth were caught during the next two days. Wadsworth was spotted early in the morning. Theobold lay quiet for most of the day, then thought he was seen by a passing German and bolted out toward the highway, without drawing fire. He hid again in a ditch near the highway, for the night. On the morning of D+2 firing came close to his hideout along the road. It was the 116th Infantry, attacking to relieve the Point, but Theobold

could not know that. Leaving the highway and cutting south, he was captured by a machine-gun post near the creek. Main spent D+1 watching German patrols go by, and a machine gun being set up in the field near his hedgerow. That night he crawled out, threw a grenade in the general direction of the machine gun, and "lit out for the Point" without drawing enemy fire.

The Company D men lay hidden all the next day under their hedgerow. No enemy search of the area was made, and they saw only a few Germans during the period. Their main cause of worry was fire from naval guns, supporting the beleaguered Point; from time to time, friendly shells came close enough to "bounce the men around" in their holes, but there were no losses. Late in the day their hopes were raised and then dashed. Four Sherman tanks rolled down the highway toward Grandcamp within sight of the Rangers. But no infantry followed, and in a short while the tanks came back and went off eastward. Germans reappeared in the field at dusk and set up machine-gun positions; the isolated Ranger group settled in for another night. They were freed next morning by the 116th Infantry.

On D+1 Colonel Rudder's force at Pointe du Hoe consisted of about 90 men able to bear arms. Restricted to a few acres, including only a part of the fortified area, they expected to be the target for heavy concentrations of artillery, and for assault by enemy ground forces. With the support of strong naval fire the Rangers held out during the day, and that afternoon their situation was improved by the landing of a craft with food, ammunition, and a platoon of reinforcements. By night they were in touch with patrols of a relief force that had reached St-Pierre-du-Mont, only 1,000 yards away. The relief of the Point came next morning, on D+2.[1]

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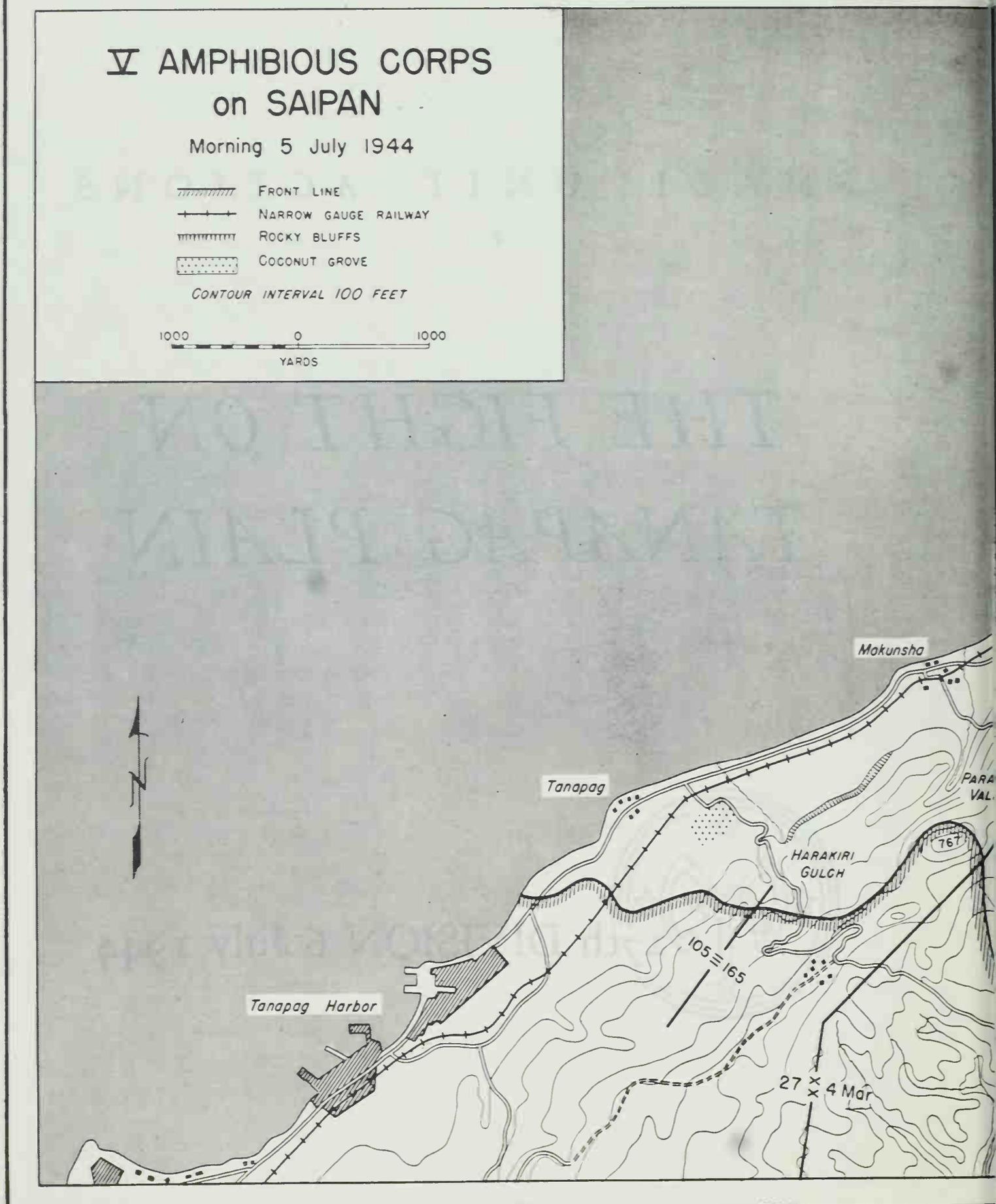
[1] For an outline account of the relief of Pointe du Hoe, see *Omaha Beachhead*, in this series.

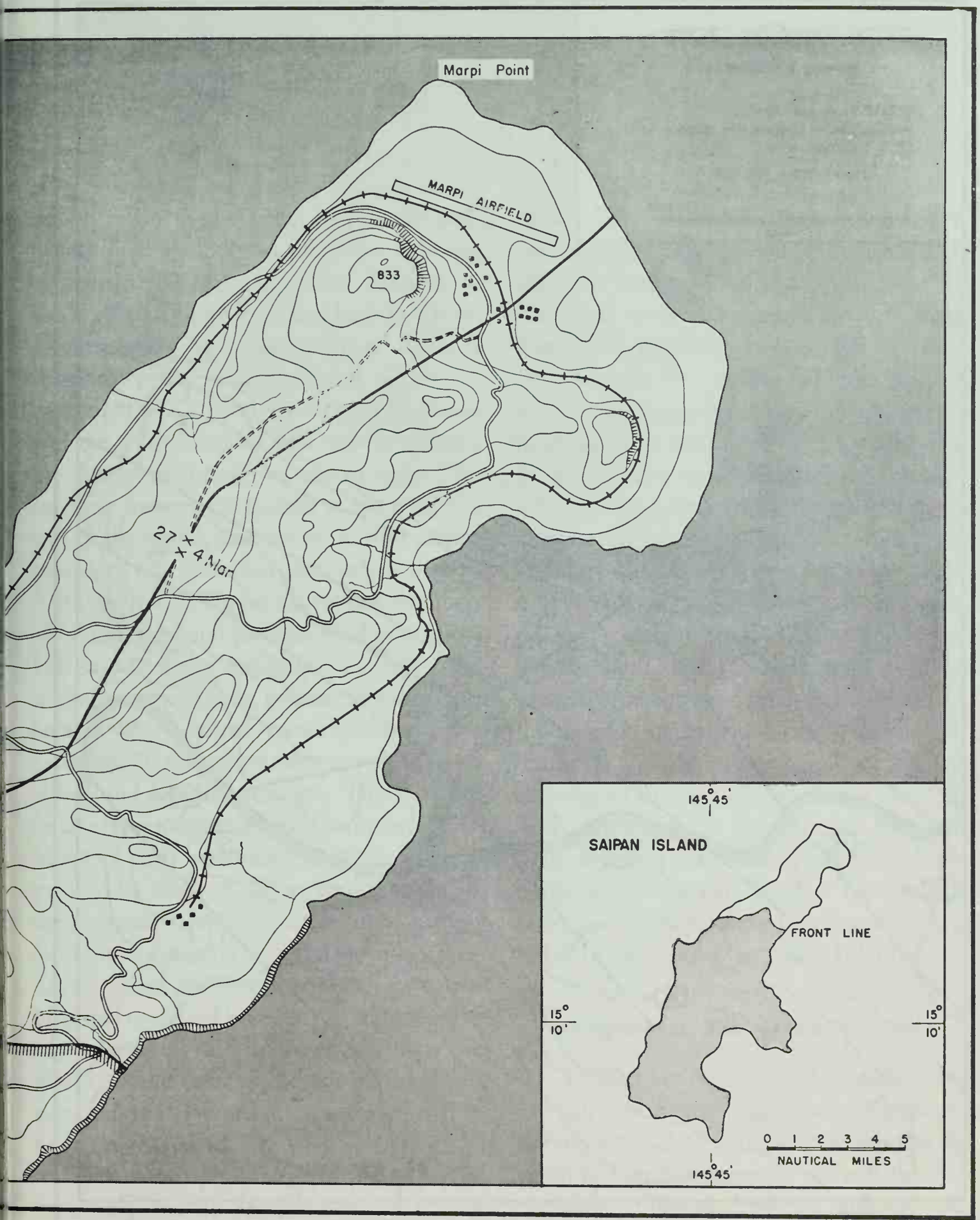
SMALL UNIT ACTIONS

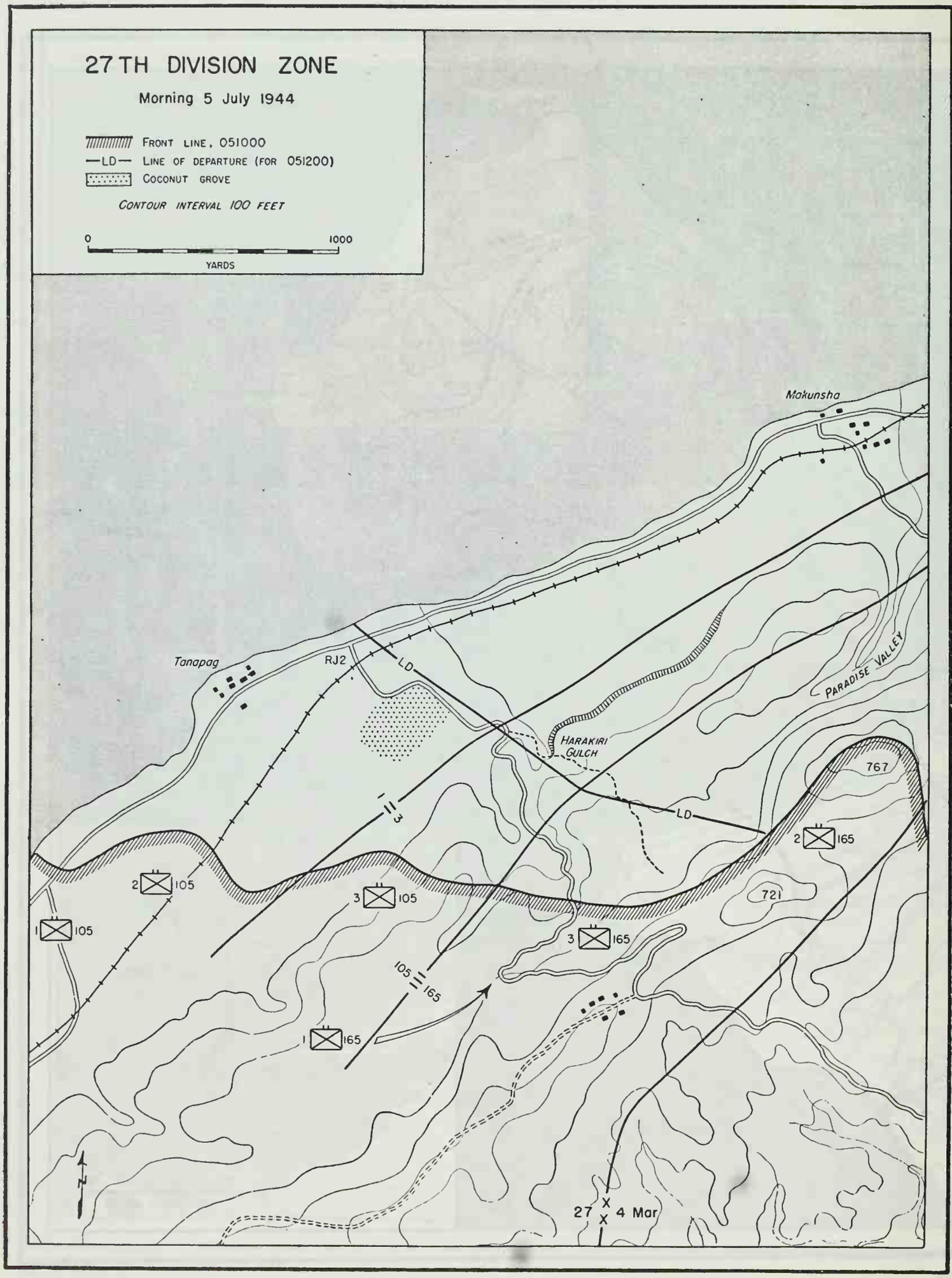
# *THE FIGHT ON TANAPAG PLAIN*

27th DIVISION 6 July 1944


V AMPHIBIOUS CORPS
on SAIPAN
Morning 5 July 1944
FRONT LINE
NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY
ROCKY BLUFFS
COCONUT GROVE
CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET
1000
0
1000
YARDS
N
Makunsha
Tanapag
PARA
VAL.
767
HARAKIRI
GULCH
105 = 165
Tanapag Harbor
27 x x 4 Mar

*MAP NO. 1*


Marpi Point
MARPI AIRFIELD
833
27 x 4 Mar
145° 45'
SAIPAN ISLAND
FRONT LINE
15° 10'
15° 10'
0 1 2 3 4 5
NAUTICAL MILES
145° 45'


27TH DIVISION ZONE
Morning 5 July 1944
FRONT LINE, 051000
—LD— LINE OF DEPARTURE (FOR 051200)
COCONUT GROVE
CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET
0
1000
YARDS
Makunsha
Tanapag
RJ2
LD
PARADISE VALLEY
HARAKIRI GULCH
767
721
2 165
2 105
3 105
1 105
3 165
105 165
1 165
27 X X 4 Mar

*MAP NO. 2*

On 5 July the battle for Saipan was ending its third week. Since the initial landings on Saipan, 15 June, the three divisions of the V Amphibious Corps had been in almost continuous and very bloody action. Though their losses had been high and the troops were tired, the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions and the 27th Division had kept plugging; the close of their task was now in sight. The Japanese forces were penned in the northern end of the island, and out of 30,000 enemy troops, it was estimated that only 5,000 to 7,000 were left, supported by one battalion of 77-mm guns and perhaps 20 of an original 100 tanks. Every indication, including the testimony of prisoners, pointed to a complete breakdown of enemy communications and to his serious difficulties with respect to food, water, and hospital facilities. The Japanese faced also a shortage of small-arms weapons. Many of their remaining units were disorganized by losses of officers, and the state of their morale was questionable. Information found in documents captured on 4 July confirmed other evidence that there were two principal centers of resistance in the area, five miles deep, still held by the enemy: near the Marpi airfield, zone of the 4th Marine Division, and at Paradise Valley, facing the 27th Division (Map No. 1).

These two divisions held the U.S. line on 5 July, the 2d Marine Division having been pinched out the day before. Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith, USMC, commanding V Amphibious Corps, was preparing for the assault on Tinian Island and wanted the 2d Marine Division to be rested for this action. The 27th Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. George W. Griner, held the western end of the front with two regiments on line in a zone one and a half miles wide. The 106th Infantry was in divisional reserve. On 5 July his two forward regiments were to attack abreast from a line of departure (shown on Map No. 2, opposite), with objectives 4,000 yards to the northeast. The terrain differed greatly in the two regimental zones. To the right, the 165th Infantry was advancing in the rugged hills that characterize the interior of Saipan Island. These hills terminate sharply in an escarpment marked by frequent stretches of cliff. Below the steep wall paralleling the shoreline an 800-yard strip of coastal plain, flat or slightly rolling, bordered the Saipan beach. This coastal plain, and the edge of the hills that dominate it, fell in the zone of the 105th Infantry.

### *Background: The Attack on 5 July*

Neither attacking regiment of the 27th Division made much headway on 5 July. At the day's end the 105th, with which this account is mainly concerned, was still short of the planned line of departure, although the left-wing units along the beach had advanced

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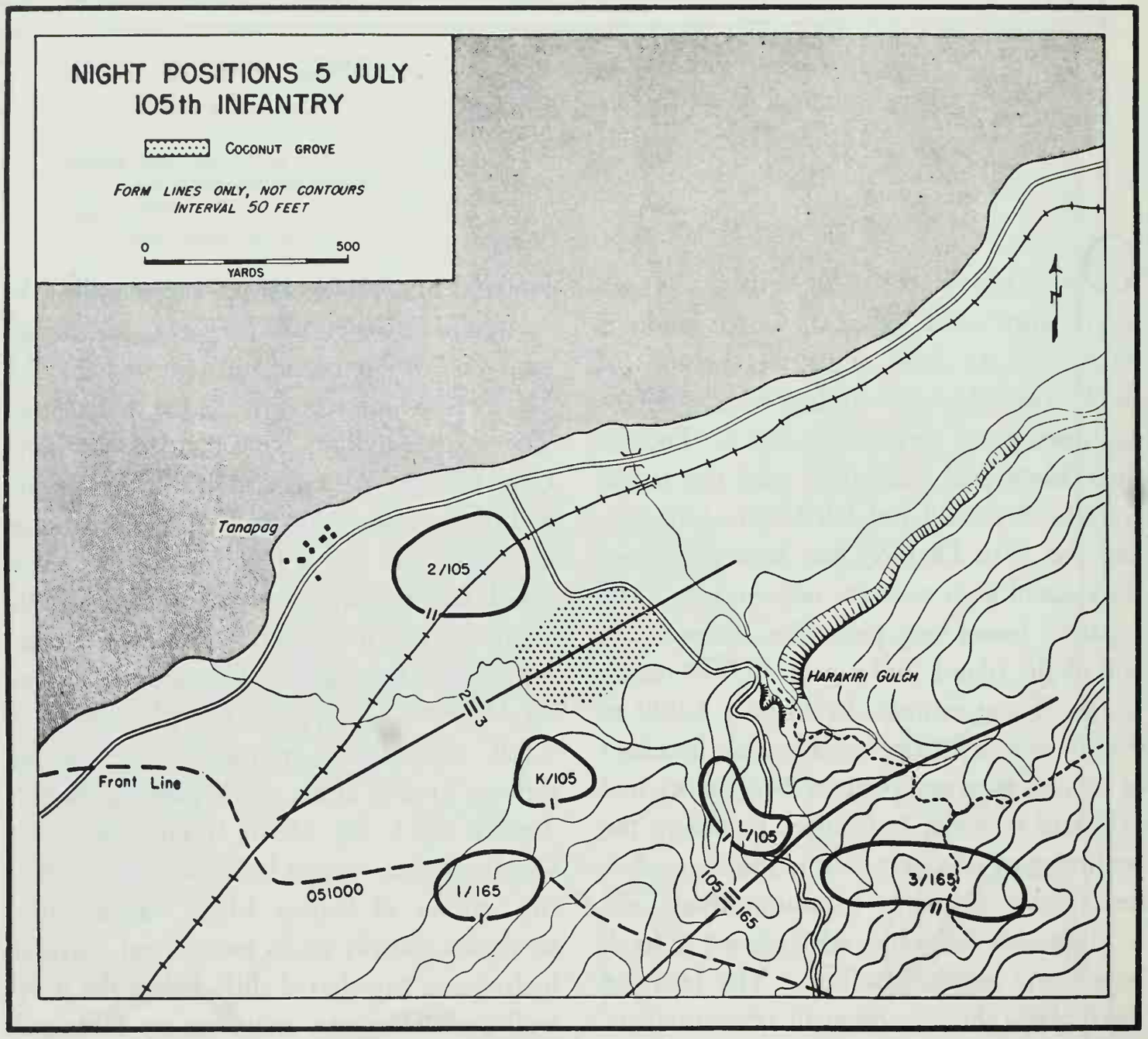



*MAP NO. 3*

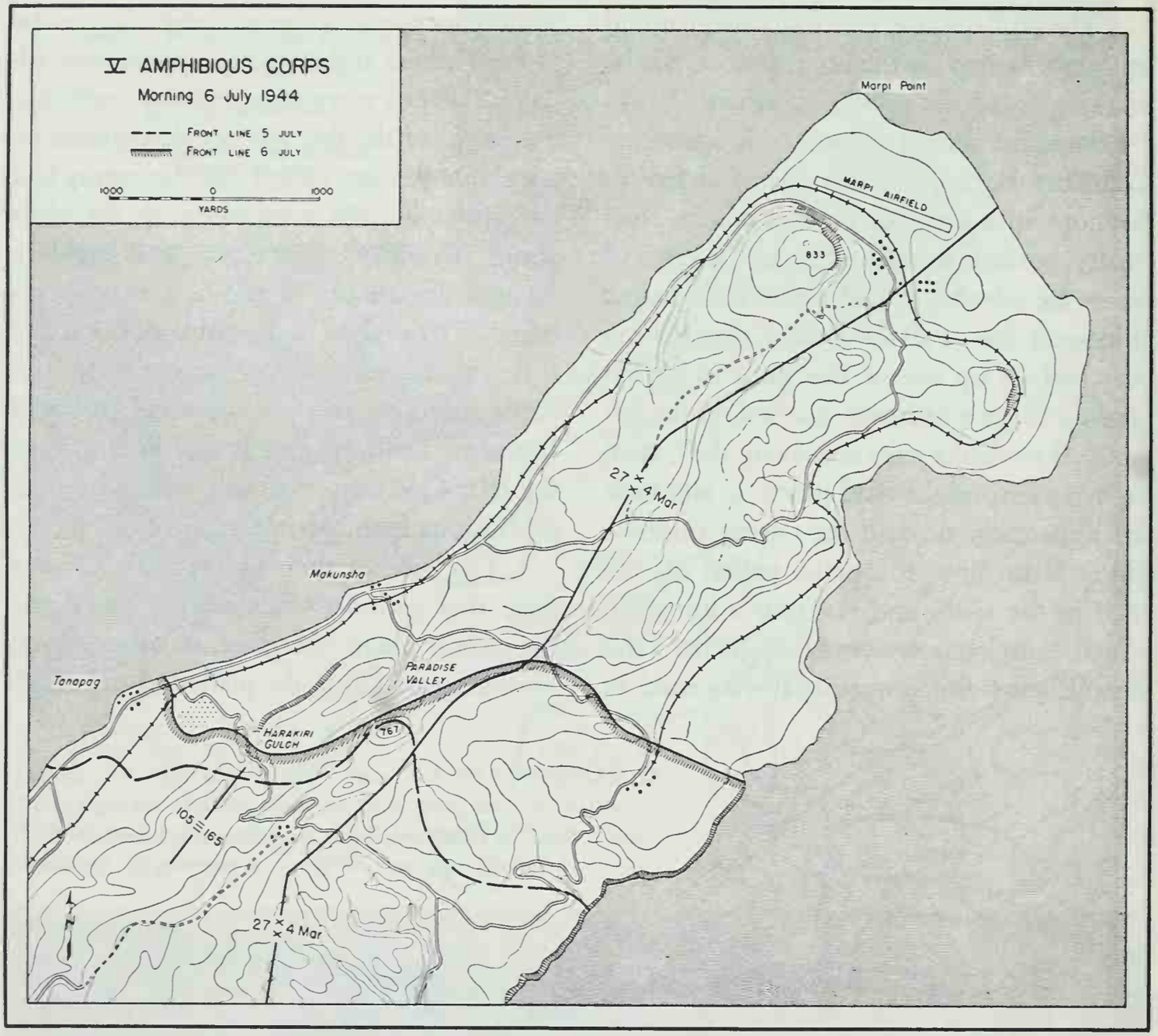
some 1,500 yards. This move had been made through terrain not previously reconnoitered, in which the Japanese had constructed extensive defenses to resist landings on the beach. Almost no opposition was encountered in these emplacements, but each in turn had to be carefully worked through, and this took time. As the line of departure was neared, some fighting began to develop all along the line, particularly to the right on the hills that walled the coastal plain.

A main road ran northeast along the beach, leading from Tanapag to the north of Saipan. Almost paralleling it was a narrow-gauge railroad, single-tracked, for service of the sugar plantation industry. Close to the line of departure, at Road Junction 2, a main road branched off east, into the hills and across the island. Just south of this junction was the most prominent landmark on the almost bare coastal plain: a large coconut grove, with tall grass beneath the trees.

The 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, moved up into this area on the afternoon of 5 July, working along the coastal plain with E and F Companies abreast (Map No. 3, opposite). Company E, mopping up enemy defensive positions in a series of platoon actions, had finally pushed almost to Road Junction 2 when the advance stalled under intense machine-gun fire. Patrols decided that the enemy had set up one or two guns in an old landing barge which was beached on the left flank. Two tanks were sent along the coastal highway beyond the road junction, and their fire apparently silenced the enemy machine guns. Returning, the tanks pulled off the road to the south and ran into a minefield which completely wrecked one of the vehicles. Enemy fire immediately reopened in steadily increasing volume, hampering rescue of the tankers and stopping any further advance. Despite every effort to locate positions, the source of the fire was not determined by the end of the day, except that the enemy had put antitank guns somewhere in the cliffs ahead. Company E stopped to organize a night position south of and near Road Junction 2. To the right of the railroad, Company F had almost reached the coconut grove late in the afternoon, mopping up small groups of Japanese. Learning that E was digging in to the left, Company F pulled over near it to establish its night perimeter.

The 3d Battalion of the 105th had a zone that included the escarpment edging the coastal plain; therefore, its units moved northeast straddling the plain and the rough

TANAPAG PLAIN *had much open ground like this, looking toward the coconut grove from the west. Hillsides on right, background. Bodies of Japanese killed in the banzai attack litter the fields (8 July) as Marines go into the grove in mopping-up operations.*




*MAP NO. 4*

hillside. Company K, on the low ground, reached the southeast side of the coconut grove in the early afternoon, and there came under considerable fire both from the grove and from the hillside to its right. Tanks worked through the trees without finding enemy positions, and K made no further progress. It dug in for the night south of the coconut plantation, at the foot of the hill.

Just ahead of K's position, two steep-sided, narrow draws broke the long wall of the escarpment. On the spur between them, the cross-island road zigzagged up from Road Junction 2. A rough trail branched off this road at the edge of the plain and followed the second of the two draws. It was this second draw, to be known later as Harakiri Gulch, that showed signs on 5 July of being a center of enemy resistance. Fire from the mouth of the draw had contributed to the troubles of Company K on the plain, but it was Company L (and, farther inland, the 165th In-

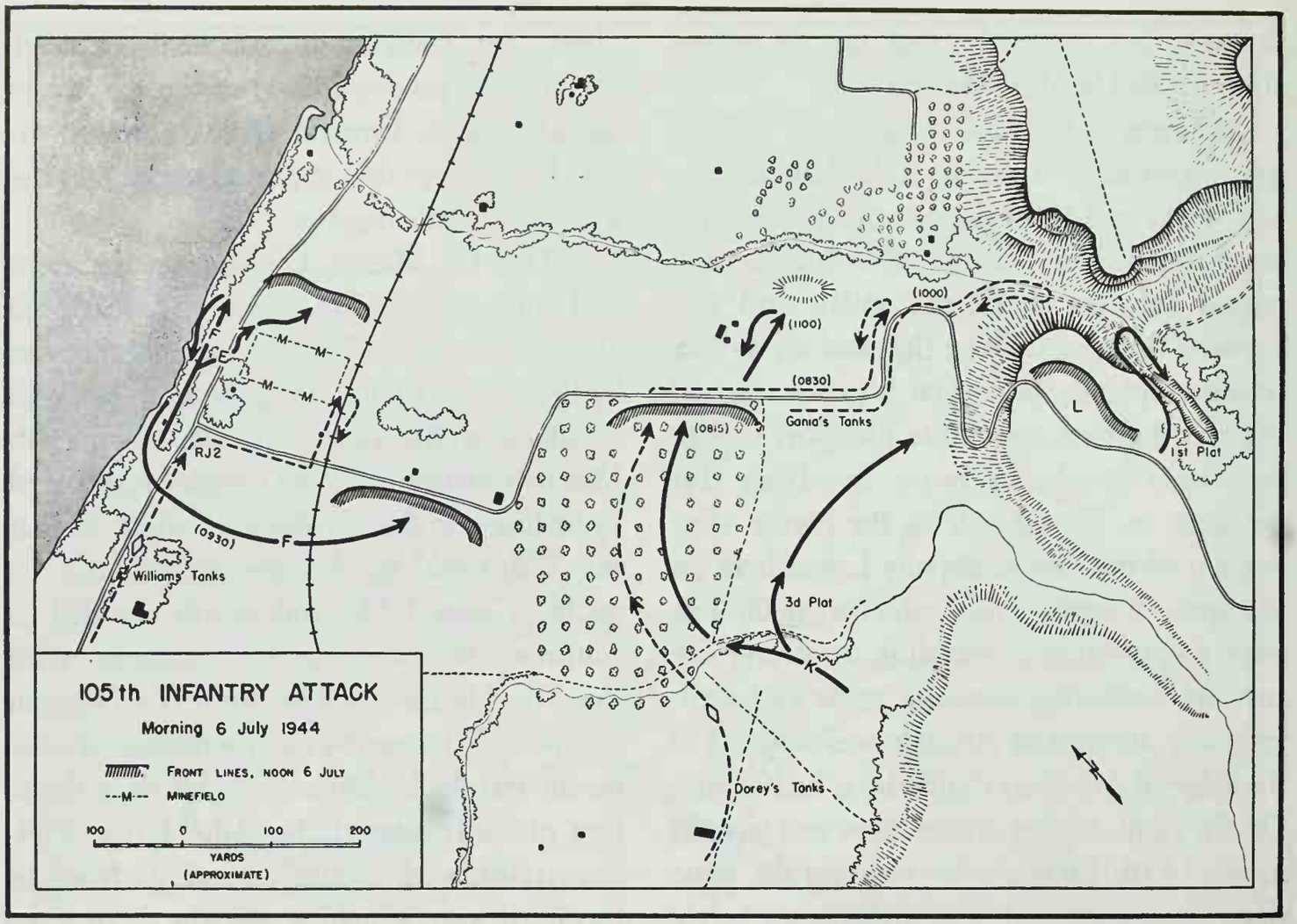
fantry) that made the real test of enemy strength in Harakiri Gulch.

Company L on 5 July faced the difficult ground on the hillside, its right flank in contact with the 3d Battalion of the 165th. Toward the middle of the morning, L had passed the first (western) gulch and was crossing the spur used by the road on its way into the upland. But when L's men reached the crest looking down into Harakiri Gulch, they were caught by heavy fire from cliff positions on the far side of the ravine. For the rest of the day, Company L was held on the spur. Despite every effort to neutralize enemy opposition by building up strong fire support, including antitank guns and artillery, any attempt at advance was stopped at the edge of Harakiri Gulch by a hail of fire. On the right, higher up the draw and beyond it, the 165th Infantry was meeting the same fierce resistance and was making no better progress. Company L dug in for the night on this spur, with I to its left rear on the hill slope.

The results of the day's action had been disappointing for the 105th Infantry. The lead units were still short of the line of departure, and, except on the right, they had not yet developed the enemy's positions. It was known in the 3d Battalion that Harakiri Gulch was strongly held, but no one yet realized how much this could affect the 105th's advance along the coastal plain below.

Plans for 6 July called for pressing the attack that had barely got under way on the previous day (Map No. 4, opposite). The main effort was scheduled to come in the 105th's zone; failing better progress on the plain, the 165th's flank would be exposed. But at 0905 on the 6th, when the action had already begun, General Griner received orders from Corps that appeared to simplify the 27th Division's mission.

The 4th Marine Division on the right had found the going easier and was well ahead in its zone. Further unequal advance by the two divisions, along the northeast axis of attack, would expose the flank of the 4th Marine Division. Enemy resistance appeared to be heaviest toward the west coast, so that the 27th could not be expected to catch up easily. General Holland Smith decided to continue the sweep to the northeast with the 4th Marines, while the 27th Division mopped up the enemy in a more limited zone on the left flank. Division zones were therefore radically altered; the 4th Marine Division, reinforced, would extend its front to the northwest, pinching out the 27th zone beyond Makunsha, and continue toward the end of the island (Map No. 6, page 82). All that remained for General Griner's division was to push about 2,500 yards further through hills and along the coastal plain. Division Headquarters was optimistic about completing this job quickly. Except for the G–2, and for the company commanders who had been in contact with the enemy at Harakiri Gulch, everyone regarded the Japanese strength at that point as amounting to little more than a minor pocket. Main enemy strength was still believed concentrated farther northeast, in Paradise Valley. General Griner had been on the point of relieving the battle-weary 165th Infantry with the 106th, but now decided to let the front-line units finish the job.




*MAP NO. 5*

By the time this new order had been received and digested by Division, the 105th Infantry was already in trouble, both on the edge of the hills and below in the plain.

### *Morning of 6 July: Attack on the Plain*

Under pressure from Division to move promptly and reach their objectives, both battalions of the 105th were ready to attack at 0700 on 6 July (Map No. 5, above).

Maj. Edward A. McCarthy, commanding the 2d Battalion of the 105th, planned his attack with an eye to avoiding the sector where he had met trouble on the previous afternoon. Ahead of his night position, beyond the first stretch of the cross-island road, was the extensive minefield which had stopped his tanks the day before and which was in an area effectively interdicted by intense enemy fire. The mines occupied virtually the whole space between highway and railroad tracks, to an estimated depth of 100 yards. A little beyond this minefield a deep ditch ran from the base of the cliffs to the sea, providing perfect cover for enemy movement and also constituting a possible tank trap. South of the minefield, toward the coconut grove, the ground was open and could be easily covered by fire from any Japanese positions along the cliffs. McCarthy decided to bypass this whole zone by slipping his battalion to the left, along the narrow strip of beach between the water and the coastal high-

way. That route would bring the 2d Battalion into a zone of prepared beach defenses, made up mainly of pillboxes emplaced for defense against landings from the sea. In order to eliminate them, McCarthy decided on an old-fashioned rolling barrage which would force the Japanese to hole up in their shelters. The infantry, following close behind this fire, would catch the enemy in their holes before they could emerge to man the firing positions.

The assault would be made in column of companies, with F leading. Company E was to follow and fan out to the right of the beach as soon as the minefield was passed. Company G, in reserve, was ordered to move back over the ground covered on 5 July, mopping up enemy elements that might have infiltrated during the night. A patrol of E was sent to the right to locate Company K, which was thought to be pushing through the coconut grove, so that E after deploying beyond the minefield could tie in with K. The patrol, three men under Sgt. Carlos A. Harris, left promptly at 0700.

The battalion attack moved off on schedule, with the 249th Field Artillery Battalion putting heavy, concentrated fire on the whole area beyond the minefield. In Company F, 1st Lt. John E. Titterington had placed his left platoon (3d) between the road and the water's edge, while the 2d Platoon moved just right of the highway, skirting the edge of the minefield.

AERIAL PHOTO OF TANAPAG PLAIN BATTLE ZONE

The advance of F Company was well coordinated and rapid, the men moving out all along the line in a series of rushes. Within a few minutes of the jump-off, both assault platoons had almost passed beyond the northern limits of the minefield, a gain of approximately 100 yards. This brought them to a point about 150 yards short of the ditch that crossed the coastal plain at right angles to the axis of advance. Company E, following close behind, was almost in position to fan out to the right. At this point the artillery fire shifted on up the road to the east and left the ditch area. Almost at once there was a heavy burst of enemy machine-gun fire, followed by a fusillade of small arms. All of the men were forced to go to earth, but they were in an extremely exposed position and began to suffer casualties. The plain was covered with foot-high grass that offered little concealment. Major McCarthy, who was with Company E, tried to get the men to start forward, moving up and down the line yelling "Up and at 'em," but the first two men in Company E who tried to get up and move were hit and killed immediately. The fire had now become intense and the whole area was alive with bullets. The supporting artillery fire was falling some distance away and had no effect on the immediate situation. So well concealed were the Japanese that none of the men along the narrow battalion front could locate the enemy fire positions.

Major McCarthy now began to try to bring up tanks or SPM's to lay down some direct fire support along the front, but when he tried to get hold of his CP by radio there was no answer. His own radio was out, and so was Capt. Clinton F. Smith's. In this emergency he sent his runner back to order up the vehicles, a mission which turned out to be a particularly slow and tedious task. By this time anyone who lifted up his head would draw heavy and accurate fire on himself, so that the runner had to crawl slowly and carefully back a distance of 150 yards before he could move rapidly. When he did get to the battalion CP, the tanks were not there and he had to go along the road all the way to Regiment on the far side of Tanapag before he was able to get the tank platoon leader and bring him up. It was 1000 before the tanks came rumbling up the road to Road Junction 2.

The period between approximately 0730, when the attack had bogged down, and the arrival of the tanks, was not entirely lost. Major McCarthy spent the first part of that time in maneuvering his men to prevent any possibility of a successful Japanese counterattack. Company E, by crawling and wriggling ahead, managed to deploy itself on a three-platoon front between the road and a point about 75 yards to the south. From this ground, just east of the minefield, the men spent the rest of the morning trying to locate the source of the fire that was causing the delay. Slowly but surely the men inched forward, a little at a time. By noon they were only 100 yards short of the ditch. About 0900, Major McCarthy decided to withdraw Company F from their cramped area between the road and the beach. He had received word from Sergeant Harris' patrol regarding the movement of Company K and now, with Company E operating along the railroad track and the road, he resolved to use Company F between E and K. He trans-

mitted the orders to 1st Lieutenant Titterington, and Company F had moved back out of the beach corridor at about the time the tanks arrived at Road Junction 2. Within an hour F had marched some distance around the rear of the line and was moving into position in the gap between the 2d and 3d Battalions. Carried out with caution, the movement was accomplished without casualties.

The 2d Battalion commander had also given his attention to the minefield that was causing so much trouble. Shortly before 0900 he called up his battalion engineer officer, 1st Lt. Richard M. Hughes, and ordered him to make a reconnaissance of the mined area. Hughes had to crawl through the minefield on his stomach because of the intense fire, but before 1000 had reported back that the field was about 50 by 100 yards and was composed of upended aerial bombs, fused as mines. He volunteered to begin removal at once and brought up his platoon from Company A, 102d Engineer Combat Battalion, to begin the job. This platoon had to work while lying flat and under constant heavy fire, a situation which made their task extremely slow.

With the arrival of the tanks, Major McCarthy was faced with the problem of getting them into position to lay down covering and supporting fire. The road was a questionable route of approach because of the interdicting fire. Furthermore, the road crossed the ditch ahead over a narrow bridge, which was almost certain to be mined. The beach could be used only with difficulty, and houses, trees, and shrubbery along the north side of the road cut down the fields of fire considerably. But Lieutenant Hughes in his reconnaissance had crept out along the railroad track for some distance and had ascertained the fact that it was not mined, so Major McCarthy determined to send his tanks along the right of way.

The tank force consisted of five mediums under the command of 1st Lt. Dudley A. Williams of the 762d Tank Battalion. The narrowness of the right of way made it necessary for these vehicles to proceed in single file along the roadbed. Williams sent them out about 20 yards apart. The lead tank crept along almost to the north edge of the minefield. There its tracks picked up one of the thin steel rails, and within a few seconds was unable to move in any direction. The tank was still far short of a point where it could do any good with its guns; tangled up as it was in the now twisted rails and ties of the cane railroad, it effectively blocked the path of the next tank behind it. Lieutenant Hughes was called over and was put to work with his men in an effort to clear a path through the minefield so that the second tank could be worked around the disabled one. While this work was in progress, the enemy brought antitank guns to bear along the railroad track; on the first two shots, both tanks were hit, although neither was put out of action. The crews reported that they "could see daylight through their tanks." Lieutenant Williams immediately asked for permission to get the vehicles out of the danger area until a route of approach could be laid out which would enable his tanks to keep moving. Major McCarthy agreeing, a cable was hooked onto the lead tank and both vehicles were hauled loose and clear of the area.

It was now after 1100, and the attack of the 2d Battalion had shown little or no progress. Company E was effectively pinned down between the minefield and the ditch across the front, about 150 yards north of Road Junction 2 where they had started. Company F had taken up a line behind the road that ran from Road Junction 2 to the coconut grove, holding there until the situation cleared up to the front. As yet no one had been able to locate accurately the source of the Japanese fire. Intelligence on this problem was achieved quite by accident, shortly after the tanks were pulled back out of danger.

While the two tanks were trying to move along the railroad track, the left platoon (1st) of Company E had been drawn up between the road and the beach. Extending from the road to the railroad track was the 3d Platoon. Both of these units were laying down a covering fire to the front, when one of the men, Pfc. Edwin J. Kula, happened to notice movement in the ditch close ahead. He called the attention of S/Sgt. Angelo D. Nicolette, his platoon sergeant, to the possibility that one of the enemy machine guns was located in the gully, and Nicolette immediately called for 60-mm mortar fire to be directed into the ditch. He was notified, in return, that the mortar section was out of ammunition and did not expect a resupply for some time. He crawled back, then, to Road Junction 2 and talked with the driver of an SPM of the 105th Cannon Company, which had just come up the road. The driver agreed to work up the coastal road as far as he could in an effort to put fire into the spot which Private Kula had suspected. Nicolette climbed aboard and the vehicle started out, but before it had gone ten yards the same antitank fire which damaged Lieutenant Williams' two tanks began landing in the area. In view of this fire, the SPM commander decided to pull back out of the exposed area. The project was abandoned for the time being.

Sergeant Nicolette was still convinced that he could get rid of this one position at least. After some discussion with Captain Smith, he got permission to withdraw his platoon from the area along the beach and, moving around and up the railroad track, to see if he could bring fire on the ditch from there. The men had to move the whole distance by crawling, so that it was past noon before they reached a place from which they could bring weapons to bear. It cost Company E one more man wounded, and after the platoon had reached its new position it found itself still unable to do anything about the enemy gun in the ditch.

S/Sgt. William H. Allen, one of the squad leaders, now asked permission to take his squad, rush the ditch, and try to knock out the position in that manner. After carefully organizing his men, Sergeant Allen started out in a swift dash toward the trench. Almost immediately the enemy fire resumed in full strength, and most of Allen's men had to duck for cover. The sergeant, who was first up and running, made a jump for the ditch and landed there, only to find himself sprawling in the midst of about eight enemy soldiers. Allen reacted automatically, shooting two of the Japanese and bayoneting a third. In the melee that followed he was shot in the leg by a bullet that wounded him in four different places. Up to that moment,

INFANTRY AND MEDIUM TANKS *of Marine units advance into coconut grove on 8 July, mopping up after Japanese banzai attack.*

the squad leader had not realized he was without support, but now he looked around and decided that he was outnumbered. In one dive he was out of the ditch and crawling back toward his company. Although wounded painfully, Allen insisted that he be allowed to take his squad back to clean out the remaining enemy soldiers. He thought there were only five left. However, the volume of fire that was directed at him after he came back out of the gully had, for the first time, given Major McCarthy and his company commanders some idea as to where the main enemy strength lay. Clearly the Japanese held the ditch in large numbers, and most of the terrible and intense fire that was keeping the men down was coming from this source, not more than 100 yards away. Allen was not permitted to return to the ditch to "clean it out." It was now approximately 1300 and the 2d Battalion still had not been able to get going.

The battle on the Tanapag Plain had been just as bitter in front of Company K, which started the day facing the coconut grove. This company, like the 2d Battalion, was ready to move off in the attack at 0700, accompanied by a platoon of light tanks under 1st Lt. Willis K. Dorey. 1st Lt. Roger P. Peyre, profiting by the experience of his company on the previous afternoon, ordered K's men to move up along a deep gully that circled along the southwest edge of the grove, making use of the cover and concealment that it offered. Stealing along this trench, the men were able to get almost into the grove itself before they were detected, but as they emerged from defilade they were taken under fire by at least two machine guns firing from deep within the grove. For a short time the

whole company was pinned down, unable to locate the source of fire.

It was at this point that Sergeant Harris and his patrol from Company E blundered into the coconut grove from the west. Sergeant Harris had been told that he would probably find Lieutenant Peyre in the grove, and had worked his way directly there without realizing that it was still in the hands of the enemy. He and his two men, Pfc. John Lopez and Pvt. Keith M. Jarrell, had no sooner entered the trees than a machine gun opened up from 25 yards' distance, wounding Harris seriously in the back. Private Lopez spotted the gun at once in a small, criblike building. He told Private Jarrell to crawl back out of the grove and get back to Captain Smith with the information that Harris had been wounded. He himself would stay with the wounded sergeant to guard him until Jarrell could get back with help. For several minutes Lopez lay on the ground with his charge, and in that period was able to spot and accurately mark the Japanese machine-gun positions in the grove. While thus engaged he noticed Company K trying to work forward against this fire and without hesitation got to his knees, endeavoring to attract attention to himself and to point out the gun positions. When this failed, Lopez made his way by short rushes to a point at the rear of the grove where he could see Dorey's tanks. It took him only a few moments to orient the tank commander on the Japanese positions, and Dorey immediately waded into the grove with his guns blazing. Ten minutes later two machine-gun positions had been completely destroyed and Peyre's men were moving up into the grove. For over an hour Company K worked their way among tremendous stock piles of supplies, mostly foodstuffs, poking around in these piles in search of stray enemy soldiers. By 0815 they were through to the north edge of the trees, facing the open ground beyond the cross-island road.

Not all of Company K had taken part in the advance through the grove. Lieutenant Peyre had placed his 3d Platoon on the right of his line with instructions to keep in sight of Company L on the hills south of Harakiri Gulch. Shortly after the rest of the company began to pull through the grove, this platoon was forced to draw to the right to maintain their contact with Company L; as a result they soon became completely separated from the remainder of their own unit. Their move brought the platoon out into the open ground just south of the grove and almost directly beneath the hills. From the very first they began drawing heavy fire from the cliffs to their right front, particularly from the north nose of the entrance to Harakiri Gulch. Using cover as much as possible the platoon managed to reach the turn in the road where it began its ascent of the hills. There fire became so intense that further movement was impossible. Lieutenant Peyre immediately ordered Dorey to take his tanks and move along the cross-island road until he reached a position from which he could put effective fire on the cliff positions to the right front. This was at 0830.

Dorey's fire worked particularly well against the enemy positions along the cliffs. It was only a matter of a few minutes before the Japanese had been driven off their guns all along the line and the fire died down. As

long as Dorey fired, the men of Company K were able to move about at will, but the moment there was any lull the soldiers could see the enemy coming back toward their guns. As a result, Dorey had to keep up a constant fire. Lieutenant Peyre was trying to coordinate this fire so that his infantrymen could advance under its support, but tank-infantry communications failed at this critical point. Peyre could neither reach Dorey on the radio nor make any impression on him with hand and arm signals. As a result Dorey simply kept patrolling up and down the road, laying down a blanket of fire on the cliffs which kept the enemy from firing, but which also kept Company K from advancing through his line of fire. Suddenly, at about 1000, Dorey pulled his tanks over to where Lieutenant Peyre had established his CP, just inside the cover of the grove, and informed him that he was almost out of ammunition and would have to return to the dumps for a resupply. He would be gone for approximately half an hour. Peyre could do nothing but let the tankers go.

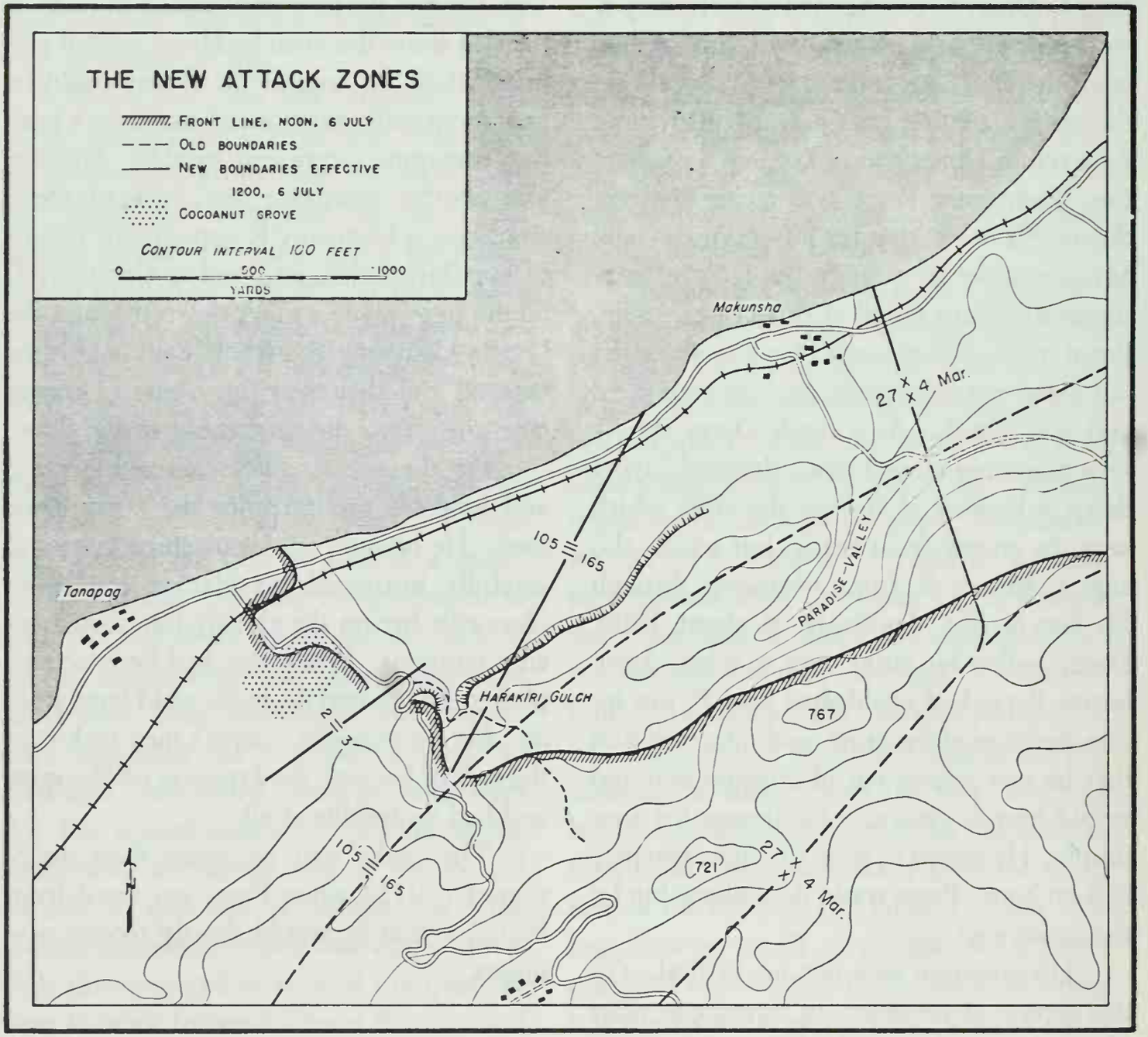
His situation was not too critical. On this section of the front, in contrast to what McCarthy was facing, the Japanese positions had been accurately located. A hundred yards ahead of Company K, in the open terrain north of the grove, a small rise in the ground forming a knoll extended part way across Peyre's zone of action. Company K had now definitely located three enemy machine-gun positions behind this rise, near the same ditch that extended in front of the 2d Battalion, and all morning Dorey's tanks had put enough fire into the area to keep the Japanese from manning the guns. In addition, most of the cave positions in the side of the cliff above the ditch had been spotted and interdicted. As long as the enemy could be kept from using these weapons, Peyre's position was quite secure and tenable. Advance was another question; any forward move would carry Company K opposite the mouth of Harakiri Gulch, and, unless Company L on the right made a move down through the Gulch, Company K's whole flank would be exposed and their rear uncovered to enemy emerging from the stronghold in the draw.

For these reasons Peyre elected to stand and hold his ground until the tanks came back. He brought up his machine guns and carefully instructed his platoon leaders to place rifle fire on the already interdicted enemy positions. When this had been accomplished, he released the tanks and Dorey went off after his resupply. Peyre's men took over the task of keeping the Japanese off the guns and had no trouble at all.

The tanks had no more than disappeared (1015) when Peyre got word from Battalion that he would shortly receive new orders.

### *Change in Attack Plans*

General Griner, upon hearing at 0915 of the change in divisional zones from Corps, had immediately notified his regimental commanders that there would be a new division order. Through the 5th of July, the main effort had been made on the left and had brought little result. The new division boundaries and objectives handed down by the Corps would have the effect of shifting the weight of the 27th's attack from left to right,




*MAP NO. 6*

as the axis of advance swung from northeast to due north (Map No. 6, above). This change of direction involved pivoting on the left wing while the 165th Infantry pressed through the hills inland to reach the coastal plain. Some time would be required to mount the attack on the new axis, but the battalion commanders of the 165th reported their readiness by 1130. King Hour for the 27th Division's attack was then set for 1200, when the main effort would be made by the 165th Infantry and, on the edge of the hills, by the 3d Battalion of the 105th.

This plan involved some shifting in the units of the 105th, notably with respect to the 3d Battalion. Realizing that the Harakiri Gulch position was an extremely strong one and that Company L had experienced little success in penetrating it thus far (see next section, page 86), Lt. Col. Edward T. Bradt, in command of the 3d Battalion, decided to bolster his right flank for the main

effort by inserting his reserve, Company I, on the right of his line, between L and the left wing company of the 165th Infantry. With his reserve committed and the main effort of the 105th now in his zone of action, Colonel Bradt had asked that he be allowed to withdraw Company K from the line, to use on his right if such a move became necessary. Col. Leonard A. Bishop agreed to this, stipulating that when the emphasis of the attack changed from left to right, Major McCarthy and the 2d Battalion would assume responsibility for all of the Tanapag Plain zone. The 2d Battalion commander therefore ordered his Company G, which had previously been mopping up in the rear areas, to prepare to relieve Company K beyond the coconut grove at 1200. Peyre was then to withdraw Company K to the 3d Battalion CP in reserve, and be ready on call to reinforce the effort up on the hill to the right.

Pending the relief, Company K was to limit its action to capturing the knoll in front of the coconut grove. This assignment did not seem too difficult to accomplish in the two hours before noon. Lieutenant Peyre's men had been successful in keeping the Japanese away from their machine-gun positions along the little ridge, and armored support would again be available. Lieutenant Dorey had returned with his tanks at approximately 1030, and the Company K commander discussed with him a plan for neutralizing the enemy fire both in Harakiri Gulch and along the cliffs. Peyre had decided to send his right platoon, the 3d, out ahead to capture the rise, while the left platoon remained on the fringe of the grove, delivering covering fire. Dorey, with his tanks, was to move up the cross-island road, take the trail that led up into Harakiri Gulch, and go into the gulch delivering fire on the cliffs, thus neutralizing the enemy cave positions as much as possible.

With these plans laid, Company K made ready to move off in attack between 1045 and 1100. There followed a sequence of events in such rapid order that it was difficult for the men to keep them straight in recounting the action.

When Company K's 3d Platoon moved out, the men were under orders to cover the ground to the rise as rapidly as possible; here the red earth had been ploughed, and there was not even the low grass present elsewhere on the coastal plain. With every man on his feet at the signal, the platoon jumped up from behind the road and began running at full speed across the open ground. The Japanese within Harakiri Gulch and from the cliffs along the axis of the advance had evidently been waiting for just such a move. Almost at once a deadly hail of small-arms and machine-gun fire was laid across the whole space of open ground. Most of the Company K men were forced to take to the earth almost at once, but one man, Pvt. Herman C. Patron, kept on running and managed to get all the way to the crest of the little knoll before he was hit through the chest by a bullet. Sgt. John A. Monaco, seeing Patron hit, got to his feet and ran out to where the wounded man lay. He was joined there a moment later by Tech/Sgt. Arthur A. Gilman. Together the two sergeants tried to get Patron back out of the fire, and within a few minutes had managed to drag him back behind the rest of the platoon. They called for an aid man, but while they waited Sergeant Monaco was

shot and killed. When the aid man reached their side, he was wounded.

Meanwhile, Peyre, seeing the right platoon stalled, had ordered his left platoon to make a try for the rise, and this platoon now ventured out of the coconut grove, laying down covering fire as they came. The company commander had also directed that his light machine guns and one section of heavies from Company M should move forward with the advancing riflemen. Lieutenant Peyre had his orders to capture the rise, and was making every effort to do so.

The Japanese had picked this precise moment to launch a counterattack on their own part, in an effort to get back to the gun positions along the ditch before the American attack could reach them. The men of Company K could plainly see the enemy soldiers running down from the cliffs on paths that led to the ditch just behind the rise. Sergeant Gilman, who was a few yards from the knoll at the time, with Sergeant Monaco and the two wounded men, looked up to see two Japanese running directly towards him at full speed. Just exactly what happened next has never been established, but there was a terrific explosion not more than 50 yards from the little ridge. Gilman saw the two leading Japanese fly up into the air. He described it later as a tremendous geyser of dirt and debris. Before he was knocked from his feet by the concussion, Gilman swears he saw parts of the first Japanese soldier's body flying at least a hundred feet in the air. It appears from all the testimony received that this explosion was caused when the leading Japanese inadvertently stepped on the horn of one of a series of large, spherical, sea mines that had been placed in the ground in this general area. Bits of the debris that fell within our lines consisted of parts of one of these mines, and demolition and mine-detector squads who worked in the area later found a minefield had been placed there.

Whatever the cause of this gigantic explosion, which evidently involved a number of heavy mines if not the whole minefield, its effect was devastating. Within the Japanese lines it created havoc. Crews were hurled away from their weapons, and the counterattack which had started was literally blown to pieces. For some time afterwards our troops could see random Japanese soldiers picking themselves up off the ground and wandering back up into the cliffs in a dazed manner. All firing from the enemy virtually ceased and, for over an hour afterwards, American troops wandered around in the open without having a shot fired at them.

Company K, which bore the brunt of the concussion on our side of the lines, did not suffer quite as much, although several freak accidents occurred. Nearly every man was blown from his feet. One soldier involuntarily squeezed the trigger on his gun and shot himself through the hand. Another man was hit twice by flying debris, with a distinct interval between the blows, and suffered a broken arm and a broken leg. Three men were wounded by fragments, and nearly all of the company were dazed and bewildered by the force of the blast. Reactions were confused and for a moment all organization was lost. Lieutenant Peyre, who had just called for artillery support a moment before, thought that the explosion was from our own artillery shells landing short. He

consequently yelled for the men to get back to the edge of the grove to cover. One squad of the 2d Platoon, on the left, did not hear this order and remained sprawled out on the ground near the top of the rise. The machine-gun squad from Company M, which had been displacing forward and had almost reached the top of the ridge when the explosion occurred, misunderstood the order, set up their machine gun, and then walked down off the hill, leaving it in plain view of the enemy while they waited for another explosion.

To add to all the confusion, Lieutenant Dorey's tanks just at this moment became involved in a fight in front of Harakiri Gulch. These vehicles had been slowly moving up in single file behind the infantry at the time of the explosion, and the blast shook up the men in the tanks quite severely. While they were trying to get their bearings in the disorder that followed, two Japanese soldiers ran out of the mouth of Harakiri Gulch, attached a magnetic mine to the lead tank, and threw a Molotov cocktail at another. Both vehicles were put out of action and Lieutenant Dorey hurriedly withdrew his remaining tanks. The crews of the disabled vehicles got out and "ran for it."

Lieutenant Peyre quickly took hold again in an effort to get his men back in hand. He soon realized that it was not our own artillery that had caused the explosion, and ordered his two platoons to recross the open ground and retake the rise that they had held so briefly. While the majority of the company were reorganizing, those men who had been left behind on the knoll came to, and ran back to rejoin the rest of the unit in the coconut grove. In the midst of this reorganization Capt. Frank H. Olander of Company G came up to report his readiness to assume responsibility for the zone of action, and Lieutenant Dorey came down the road with his tanks from the hillside. Under the circumstances Lieutenant Peyre decided not to try to take the rise again, but to have Company G effect its relief in the relative security of the grove.

It was while the conferences were going on relative to the relief that everyone suddenly became conscious of the Company M machine gun sitting unattended on the top of the hill. The Japanese seemed to have discovered it at the same time, and the Company K men could see one or two enemy soldiers running along the base of the cliff toward it. Sergeant Gilman and one of his men, Pfc. Rayburn E. Harlan, made a mad dash for the rise, almost 150 yards away. By hard running Private Harlan managed to get there first, dove behind the gun, and got off a burst at the Japanese who were almost on him. This burst killed both enemy soldiers, but in a moment or two Harlan himself was hit in the hands by enemy rifle fire; both he and Gilman, who had come up, had to try to find cover from concentrated fire. Another of Peyre's men was hit in the face by a random bullet.

In this situation, one of the Company M machine gunners, Pfc. Wong, commandeered one of Lieutenant Dorey's tanks and got aboard. From this exposed position he directed the vehicle out across the open ground to the man with the broken arm and leg and lifted him aboard. Then he very calmly walked over to the machine gun, picked it up and put it aboard the tank. As

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he finished this task, he himself received a serious head wound, but managed to make his way back to the safety of the grove along with Harlan and Gilman, beside the tank.

It was now nearly 1230 and Company K's line was still on the north edge of the coconut grove. The next hour was spent in relieving K with Company G. Lieutenant Peyre moved his men back to the battalion CP behind the grove and Captain Olander began to organize his company preparatory to making, in his turn, an assault on the disputed rise beyond the grove. As the morning's action ended on the Tanapag Plain, the 2d Battalion was taking over the whole zone as far as the edge of the hills. No appreciable advance had yet been made beyond the positions reached the day before.

### *The Morning Attack at Harakiri Gulch*

Under the original plans for 6 July, the 3d Battalion of the 105th was responsible for the hillslopes along the coastal plain. Here, Company L had reached the edge of Harakiri Gulch the day before, and then had been stopped by strong Japanese resistance. On the morning of the 6th, with Company K fighting to move past the foot of the gulch on the plain, Company L had renewed its effort to cross the draw itself, near the lower end.

In view of experience gained on the previous day, Capt. Robert J. Spaulding planned carefully for what promised to be a most difficult attack. Narrow and canyonlike at the mouth, the draw forked into two smaller draws as it met the long hillslopes; the larger of the two ran south, still steepsided, for 400 yards and then dwindled into a ravine that curved east around a plateau of rocky wastelands. Near the mouth on the plain both sides of the draw presented steep rock faces, almost cliffs, 50 to 60 feet high. Enemy firing positions, dug in, or using caves on the steep eastern wall, could sweep the floor and the west side of the gulch from end to end. By grazing fire they could also control the crest of the nose over which Company L must attack, and make it difficult for Captain Spaulding's supporting weapons to get direct fields of fire or even observation. Artillery could not be used effectively to get at the enemy cliff positions without endangering Company L itself. Nevertheless, supporting fire was the key to any successful advance, and Spaulding proposed to get it in two ways.

He had asked for a platoon of tanks; these he planned to send down near the plain, around the nose of high ground on his side of the gulch, and up into the draw. Tanks had tried to work down the gulch from its upper end on 4 July and two had been knocked out. Spaulding thought approach from below, along the short trail, would give the tanks better ground, and that he could help them somewhat by covering fire.

His other device for building fire support involved use of the little secondary draw that ran beside Company L's position down into the main gulch; deep, curving, narrow, and covered with foliage, the route promised protection until it reached the floor of the main draw. Beyond that point, there was no solution to the problem of finding cover; the brush on the floor of the gulch would give no protection against plunging fire. But Captain Spaulding thought his 1st Platoon could get

as far as the mouth of the ravine and there set up machine guns to control enemy positions along the gulch and on its opposite sides. Under covering fire from the machine guns and the tanks, Spaulding proposed to send his 2d Platoon straight down and across the gulch.

Timed to start with the attack in the plain below, Spaulding's effort began at 0700. His 1st Platoon crawled up over the ridge and down into the tributary ravine without drawing any fire. Moving stealthily in single file along this narrow corridor, the platoon escaped detection until they reached its mouth. There they set up two light machine guns and began firing at the caves in the face of the opposite wall of Harakiri Gulch. Only a few bursts got away before the enemy began to return the fire with .50-cal. and the 37-mm guns aboard the disabled American tanks in the gulch.[1] These tanks they had cleverly camouflaged. The fire drove L's machine gunners off their weapons, and when two men were brought up with rifle grenades in an effort to put the tanks out of action, both were seriously wounded. The intense Japanese fire continued, and finally Tech/Sgt. Siegbert S. Heidelberger, in command of the platoon, went back to Captain Spaulding and described his situation. Inasmuch as he was no longer doing any good in the valley, the company commander ordered a withdrawal. Sergeant Heidelberger's platoon then laboriously made their way back up the ravine and climbed out to their

[1] These were lost higher up the gulch in attack on 4 July.

PARADISE VALLEY, *near its northern end, had cliffs with cave positions like those in Harakiri Gulch. (Photo taken after 8 July.)*

original starting position. This futile attempt against the enemy had consumed most of the forenoon.

The effort to bring tank fire into play at the lower end of the gulch was equally unsuccessful. The tanks assigned to the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry, consisted of two platoons of lights under the command of Lieutenant Dorey and 2d Lt. Gino Ganio. Ganio's platoon, which Company L expected to use, consisted of four lights instead of five, the state of tank casualties on Saipan having reduced almost the whole provisional tank battalion to skeleton platoons, scraped together from whatever was at hand. Ganio's instructions on the morning of 6 July were not too explicit. He was to proceed up the coast road to Road Junction 2 and report to the 3d Battalion near the coconut grove. Delay in moving up to the front lines was caused by congestion of supply traffic on the narrow thoroughfare up the coast; when Ganio reached Road Junction 2, it was to find that no one knew exactly where the 3d Battalion CP really was.[1] After moving up the inland road haltingly for some little time, Ganio finally met Lieutenant Peyre of Company K on the road in front of the grove. At that time, the Company K commander was in the midst of his attempts to neutralize his right flank troubles, and Dorey had just reported that he was running low on ammunition. Peyre, thinking that these tanks of Ganio's had been sent up to take over while Dorey resupplied, tried to put the new platoon to work. He was about to give them targets when Captain Spaulding came down the hill looking for the vehicles that had been assigned to him. After a sharp argument between the two rifle company commanders, Spaulding finally convinced both Ganio and Peyre that the tanks were meant for him. He then took the platoon on up the hill and showed Ganio what he wanted done and where he wanted him to work. It was already nearly 1000.

Captain Spaulding had not changed his original plan. He told the tank platoon leader that he wanted him to go up the trail that forked left from the main road into the middle of the gulch, and take the enemy in the cliff face under fire. Ganio told Spaulding that unless he remained buttoned up he could not move into the area, on account of heavy small-arms fire, and that if he did go in buttoned up, his work would be of little use without men on the phones to call targets. At this point Pfc. James R. Boyles volunteered to go along with the lead tank if the others would cover him. This was agreed upon and Ganio's tanks moved back down the road to the trail, made the turn around the end of the nose, and started to move up into the draw. Almost at once Boyles was shot and mortally wounded. For over half an hour Ganio worked to get him back out of the gulch, but by the time Boyles was brought back to the aid station he was dead.

Ganio now reorganized his tanks and decided to make a try at the gulch without any infantry help. Leaving the road again, his column had no sooner begun to nose up into the valley than three enemy soldiers jumped out of the bushes and clapped a magnetic mine onto the side of the third tank in line. The gunner in the vehicle behind shot down the three Japanese, but the damage

[1] Lieutenant Dorey, taking a different route, had arrived right on time. He was helped, to some extent, by knowing where he had left K Company on the preceding afternoon.

had already been done. The mine exploded and the disabled tank slid into the ditch minus a track. Lieutenant Ganio, with the help of Lieutenant Dorey, whose vehicles had now returned, helped to evacuate the crew from the crippled tank; upon completion of that task, he again organized for a drive up into the valley. Using one vehicle to cover the others, he managed to get well up into the gulch and sprayed the walls thoroughly but without noticeable effects. At the time of the explosion north of the valley, he withdrew to the mouth and the road, and while sitting there he began to receive fire from the guns of the two American tanks which the Japanese had taken over within the gulch. He withdrew altogether from the area.

Failure of the efforts to build up supporting fires had made impossible any direct attack by movement of infantry into the gulch. On the left of Spaulding's company front the 2d and 3d Platoons were behind the ridge, ready to take advantage of any break in the enemy fire. But no such chance came during the morning; whenever a man showed his head at the crest, he immediately drew a heavy concentration of grazing fire that swept the length of the ridge line. As a result of the morning's trials, Spaulding and his platoon leaders were more convinced than ever that, until the enemy firing positions on the opposite side of the draw were neutralized, no attempt to get into the center of resistance would succeed.

Meanwhile, as a result of the change in Division's plans during the forenoon, the gulch promised to become a main zone in the 27th's battle, and on a more extended front.

### *The Afternoon Attack at Harakiri Gulch*

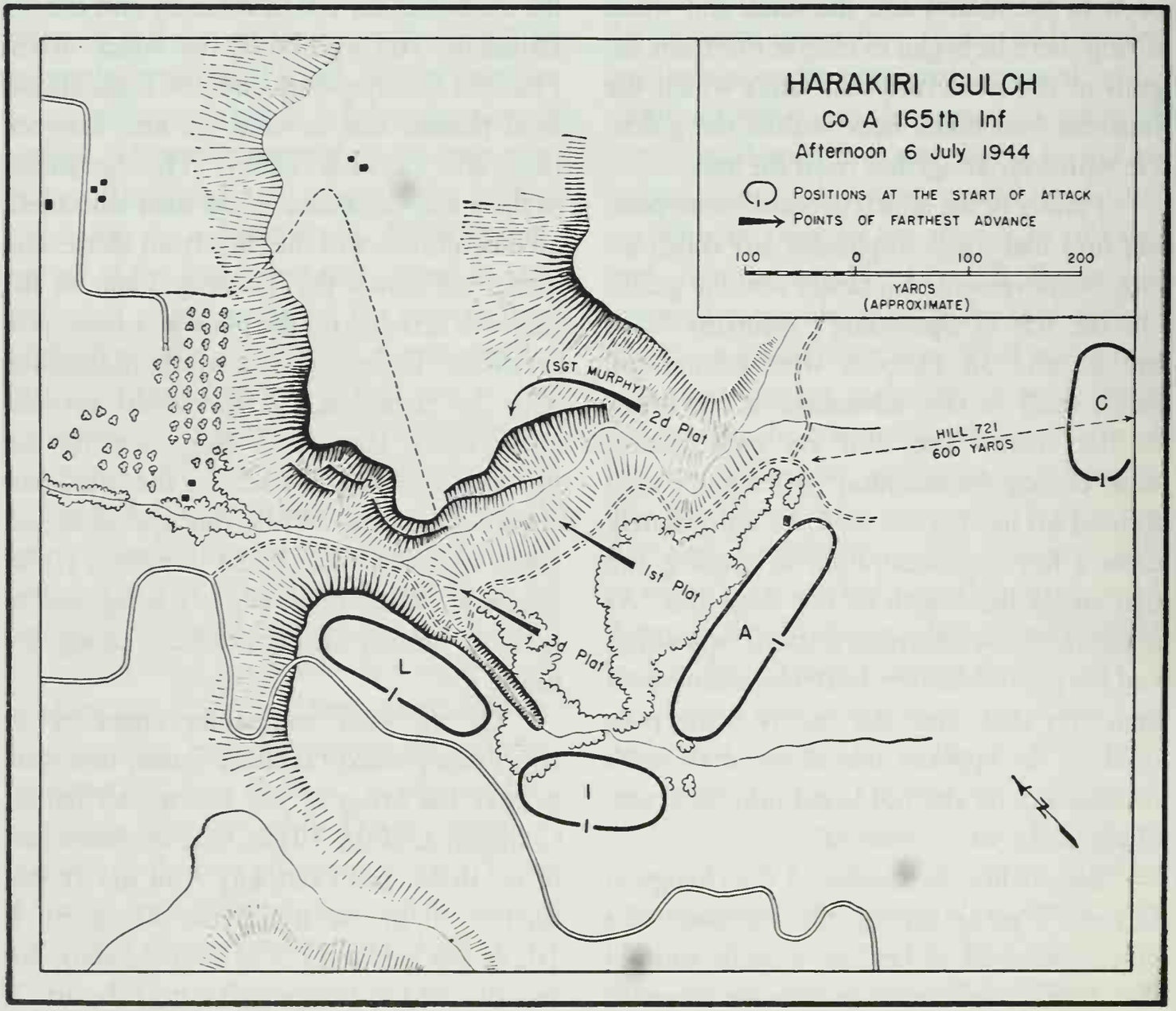
With the shift of weight in effort to the right, at noon six rifle companies of the 27th Division were poised to attack abreast in the hills, from the edge of the plain to the new division boundary. If their attack succeeded, they would drive the Japanese out of the high-ground positions which could put dominating fire on the Tanapag Plain (Map No. 7, page 90).

The basic plan of movement called for the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 165th Infantry to attack across Harakiri Gulch and up onto the high, almost level plateau that covered the area between there and Paradise Valley. The companies of these two battalions would then wheel left, go down the face of the cliffs from above, and sweep out across the Tanapag Plain to the sea, each arriving on the plain at a point progressively farther east toward Makunsha. The 2d Battalion, 165th would proceed north down Paradise Valley, cleaning out this strongpoint, and reaching the beach just above Makunsha. While this operation was going on in the hills, the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry, on the division's left wing, was to make a limited attack northeast along the beach.

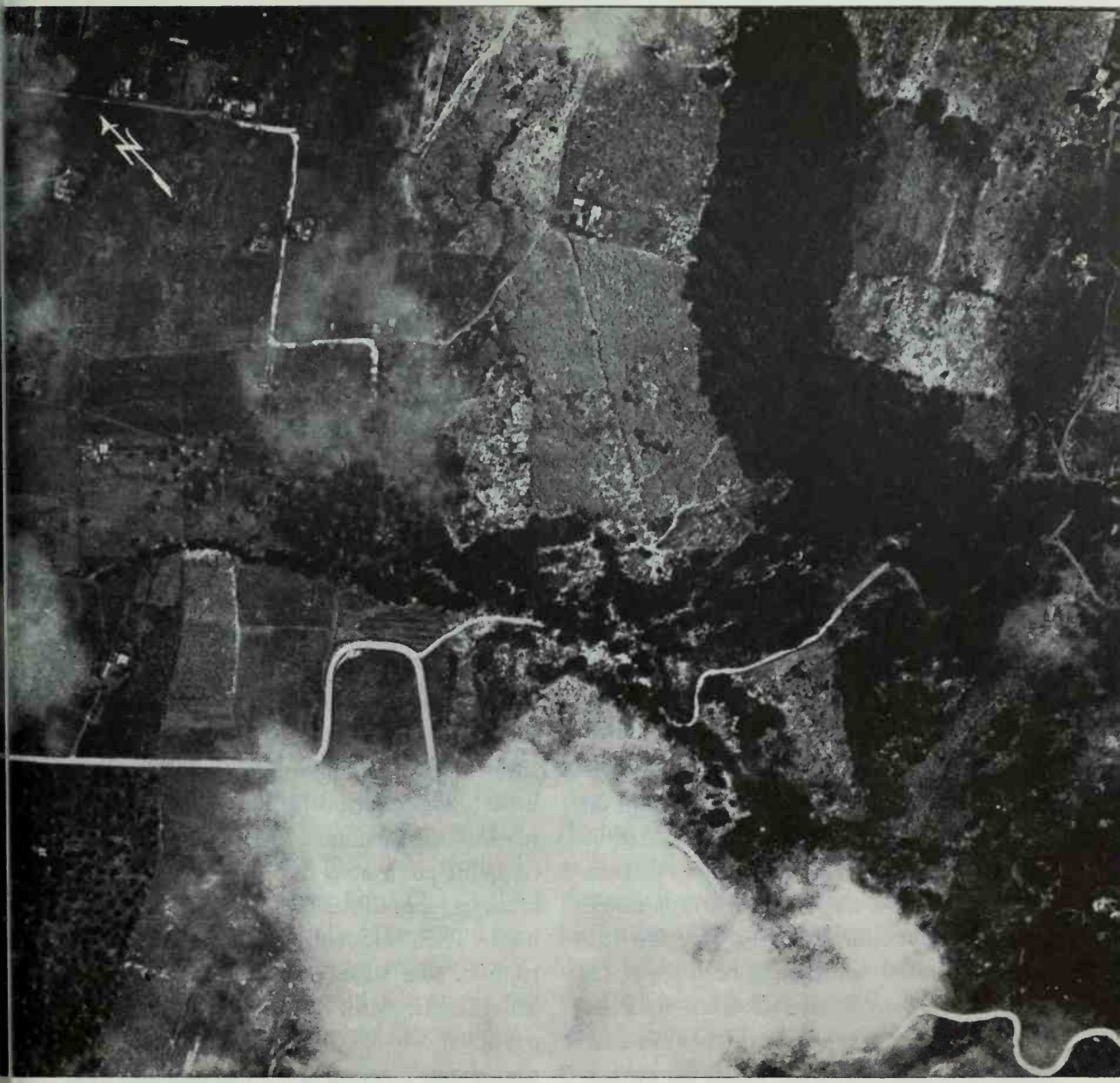
Of the four companies attacking in zones that crossed Harakiri Gulch, two were to bear the brunt of the afternoon's battle: Company L of the 105th, near the lower end of the draw, and Company A of the 165th, further up in the hill mass. Company I, 105th was between L and A at the start, but was destined to be pinched out as the attack moved into the gulch. Beyond A, the gulch

narrowed into the ravine curving off to the east. This upper arm of the draw, Company C's zone, can be regarded as part of the action on the higher ground, which will not be considered here.

The heaviest fighting fell to Company A, 165th, commanded by Capt. Lawrence J. O'Brien. His unit faced the upper end of the main part of the draw, just where it began to angle southeast and grow smaller. The 3d Battalion, 165th had tried this end of the draw on 5 July, to find it as heavily defended as the lower stretch. No troops had been able to get into the valley and stay there. Captain O'Brien knew where the trouble lay; he believed, nevertheless, that the new azimuth of attack would favor his effort. It meant, instead of crossing the gulch at right angles to its axis, approaching from the higher hill slopes above the main draw, and crossing it on a long diagonal. This route had not been tried before, and it might avoid the fields of




*MAP NO. 7*



AERIAL PHOTO OF HARAKIRI GULCH SECTOR

fire of some of the Japanese positions along the cliffs in the eastern wall.

Company A's formation was in three platoons abreast on a long skirmish line. The 3d platoon on the left was near the trail in the gulch; the 1st Platoon would operate almost down the center of the draw; the 2d Platoon was near the bend of the draw, and its advance, if successful, would carry on to the high ground north of Harakiri Gulch and come on the enemy's cave positions from the rear and above.

The company faced, in its immediate front, certain unusual terrain features. The

CAPT. LAWRENCE J. O'BRIEN
*Commander of Company A, 165th Infantry*

first, on the hill slope funneling down to the gulch, was a series of ditches that looked almost as though they had been dug in preparation for piping a water supply into a house. On each side of these ditches were the little mounds of earth which had been excavated from them, now hardened from long exposure to the weather. The ditches ran from north to south, giving the gulch the appearance of a washboard. Company A, by virtue of the direction of its attack, would work all the way through them. Interspersed in these ditches were numerous spider holes of the type which the Japanese like so well to construct and which American troops had come across before on Kwajalein and Eniwetok. Round and covered by cleverly camouflaged nets, they were deep enough for one or two enemy riflemen to sit cross-legged in them.

Another distinguishing feature of the approaches to the draw was the occasional large-trunked trees, having enough foliage above to conceal riflemen. Among the trees were little straw shacks, scattered along the slopes above the gulch at intervals of 30 or 40 yards. They were not arranged in any symmetrical pattern; had there not been so many of them, about 15, they might have been taken for the buildings of a farm.

From the south rim of the gulch, Company A proceeded cautiously down the steep slopes of the hill. Captain O'Brien had called for an intense mortar barrage with his own 60-mm tubes and with the 81-mm mortars of Company D. This lasted for ten minutes before the actual attack began. As the men moved forward there was almost a dead silence in the valley below. Moving from cover to cover and taking advantage of every little hillock and bush, the whole company reached a line almost 200 yards from the jump-off point atop the high ground. This brought them 20 or 30 yards into the valley itself. Then, suddenly, came a strange interruption, as a series of explosions shook the little shacks. Most of A's men dove for the ditches and took cover. The explosions continued over a period of 15 minutes and then ceased. Infantrymen edged forward and peered into the first of the buildings. Inside, three Japanese soldiers had committed suicide by holding grenades to their abdomens. In the next hut there were four more and in the next, two. Altogether, later investigation showed that 60 enemy soldiers had unaccountably committed suicide in these little houses over a period of a few minutes. This

was the incident that gave the valley its name of Harakiri Gulch.

The suicides became all the more mysterious in the light of events that soon followed. The men of Company A continued to move ahead cautiously for a few more yards. 2d Lt. Matthew C. Masem, commander of O'Brien's 1st Platoon, had jumped into one of the ditches and from there was looking cautiously around when he was joined by three other men from his platoon. Just as they jumped into the ditch, a rifle shot rang out ahead and a bullet thudded into the earth near Masem's head. S/Sgt. Clarence L. Anderson, one of the men who had just jumped into the hole, poked his head up over the mound of earth and spotted something moving in one of the trees a short distance ahead. It looked like a rope that might have been used by a Japanese soldier to climb up into the heavy foliage and it was still swinging as though, whatever it was, it had been used very recently. Anderson rose up to take a shot at the tree and, as he did so, received a serious wound that felled him. One of the other men in the ditch with Masem and his group was Tech. 4 Kice, the company aid man. Kice immediately told the others to "get the hell out of the hole so I can work on him." All of the little group except Kice and Anderson immediately scrambled for cover somewhere else. Masem and S/Sgt. Joseph R. Murphy tumbled back into a ditch behind them, and two other men, including Pfc. John Sekula, jumped behind a tree a few feet away. Sekula received one shot which ripped away his canteen, and then the men suddenly realized that the whole area was literally alive with bullets. The one that hit Sekula's canteen came from somewhere behind him.

Lieutenant Masem was very worried about the situation. The fire was so intense that neither he nor any of his men could risk movement without being reasonably certain of being hit. He decided to pull back to the base of the slope at the top of the draw, where the ditches were deeper and where no one would be behind him, until he could locate the source of all this fire and do something about it. He called over to Kice and asked him if Anderson could be removed from the hole to a safer place. Anderson answered, "Kice is dead." The aid man had been hit in the head while bending over the wounded man. Sergeant Murphy, the platoon leader, now called over to Pfc. Shires, acting platoon sergeant of the 3d Platoon on his left, and asked Shires if he could borrow his aid man to help take care of Anderson. Shires sent Pfc. Standlee Morgan over to the 1st Platoon area, and the aid man ran down one of the ditches to where Masem was. However, just as he tried to scramble across the hump of dirt to where the wounded man lay, he was hit in the ankle and tumbled back into the ditch behind. Shires himself came crawling over to where Morgan lay and, together with Pfc. Arthur Coats, he managed to work the wounded Morgan back out of the fire to safety. When Shires attempted to get back to his own platoon, he was trapped in a hole in the 1st Platoon area and couldn't move.

New complications had now arisen in the valley. The shacks which had been occupied by the suiciding Japanese had caught fire and were burning merrily. Most of Masem's men, lying in the ditches, were so close at hand that the heat was unbearable.

It was imperative that the platoon get back, but the problem of the wounded Anderson was still to be solved. Masem, in radio contact with Captain O'Brien, was trying to control his platoon and direct their fire. Shortly after Shires had crawled back with Morgan, Masem again asked if anyone would volunteer to try to get Anderson out of the hole. Pfc. Joseph Becay and Pfc. George Brieling volunteered. When they were given permission to go ahead, Becay yelled over to Anderson and told him to take off all of his equipment. After Anderson called back that this had been done, the two men made one dive and landed in the hole squarely on top of Kice and Anderson. Without wasting time, they picked the wounded man up by the head and heels and threw him bodily into the ditch behind. They then dove over after him. After that Becay dragged Anderson back along the trenches to the edge of the gulch and carried him up the hill.

During this time, the 3d Platoon on Masem's left had become badly disorganized They had run into the same accurate grazing fire that had caused so much trouble in the 1st Platoon. Almost in the center of the 3d there was a little stretch of open ground that offered no cover whatsoever, so that Shires had to split his platoon around it. Leaving a BAR man to cover the open space, Shires stayed with the right squad of his platoon; during the attempt to get back to them after the rescue of Morgan, he was cut off altogether. When the fire broke out among the shacks, the 3d Platoon was in the most danger and suffered the most from the intense heat. Three of the men made their way back to Captain O'Brien and explained the platoon's situation. The company commander ordered the men to pull back out of the heat to the slopes above the valley. Before they could execute this maneuver two more men received bullet wounds.

Captain O'Brien had been trying frantically to keep his company moving ahead by getting men around the flanks of the hidden Japanese. His own 2d Platoon, on his right, and Company I, 105th Infantry, on his left, could not make much progress in spite of the company commander's pleading.

The 2d Platoon, which was advancing half in the gulch and half on the high ground beyond it, was under the command of 1st Lt. George E. Martin, O'Brien's executive officer. Martin was with the lower half of his platoon, the part in the draw, and with them had advanced out across the floor in conjunction with the units on his left. When the shooting started in the 1st Platoon area, Martin was hit almost as soon as Anderson, going down with a serious bullet wound in the shoulder. The platoon was then in command of Tech/Sgt. Medina, over on the other end of the platoon, who described the action of the afternoon as follows:

The 2d Platoon jumped off with Company C tied into our right squad, commanded by Sgt. Frank Destefano, and the 1st Platoon of Company A was on our left. We moved about 200 yards downhill and the 1st Platoon began to get some sniper fire. After 15 minutes, our whole line moved forward again and this time Charlie Company [1] got pinned down. After waiting several minutes, Charlie Company asked for help and Lieutenant Martin sent me and Tech. 4 Cantrell, (our fighting cook), to see if a tank could come down the hill and give support to Charlie Company. The

[1] On his right (east) faced with crossing the ravine.

tank came halfway down the hill and that was all. It didn't do any good. By this time the line is ready to move forward again. So we resume the advance. (All this time there hasn't been a shot fired from the enemy, only one or two over in the 1st Platoon area, plus some shacks which are blowing up with Japs inside of them.) But to our surprise the Japs are entrenched in a large trench at the bottom of the hill, and the Sons of Heaven, they let us come within 25 or 30 yards of the trench. They are looking up at us and we cannot see them. At this time, all hell broke loose.

The 2d Platoon's sector extends from a little gully, or ditch on the left, where the left squad under S/Sgt. J. R. Murphy is anchored, to a point over on the ridge[1] where I am with Sergeant Destafano's squad. On our right rear is another deep draw[2] and that is where Charlie Company ties in with us.

The Japs open up first with machine-gun fire from the ridge to our front and with a lot of rifle fire from the ditches below us. I could hear Lieutenant Martin yell, "Keep going men," but we did not go very far as the fire was tremendous. The first man I saw go down was Pfc. Harold Lees, the scout of Destafano's squad. He got hit in the leg, and I saw Sergeant Destafano reach out and pull him in and give him first aid. I ordered everybody to get in as good a position as they could, as the squad area had no cover and we were more or less at the mercy of the Japs. All this time I am only about ten yards from Lees, but I cannot move as the minute I do, a sniper puts two or three shots right in front of my eyes. I hadn't heard from Lieutenant Martin for some time, so I yell, but he does not answer. After hesitating a few minutes I decide I better take a chance and find out what has happened. I took a dive and somehow or another I got back about ten yards to a hole where the radio man was. I asked him where Martin is, but he don't know. I took the radio and contacted Captain O'Brien. He told me that Lieutenant Martin was hit and had gone back. The place where I am now is worse than the first place and is getting hotter, so I again dodge bullets and moved. The next thing I know, Sharkey is hit on the left flank, next to the 1st Platoon. I called Captain O'Brien and asked for two litters. The situation is really getting bad now. Captain O'Brien tells me to withdraw my platoon. But first I got casualties to get out of the line of fire. I brought my light machine gun up and placed it and told the gunner to fire along the crest of the ridge we are on and down towards the trenches below. Overhead fire it was. Then I coordinated this fire by radio with D Company's heavies which were high up on the hill behind us, and tried to evacuate Pfc. Lees. Now I cannot get to Destafano, who is with Lees, because of the heavy fire which is coming all around, but I hear Destafano ask for a volunteer from his squad. Pfc. James Fitzpatrick volunteered and together he and Destafano get Lees out of that spot and start back towards me, about ten yards away, but just when they get to the spot where my CP is now, a bullet goes clean through Lees' arm, which is around Fitzpatrick's shoulder, and goes through Fitz' chest, killing him instantly. By this time the litter bearers (damned good men) are crawling up behind and they evacuate Lees. Charlie Company has now drawn back on our rear. My next move is to get my platoon back. God only knows how I did it. I asked for a tank. No soap. Then, again, I placed fire all along the front to keep the Nips' heads down. First, I told my platoon guide, S/Sgt. Claude Browne, to withdraw the support squad under Sergeant Mogalski. This was accomplished. Then I signaled the 1st squad on my left to move all at once, through a ditch, to a point out of the line of fire. I also signaled Destafano's squad, on the front of me, to move, but they didn't make it. Only the left squad[1] accomplished the move.

During the heat of the battle I had got separated from most of Destafano's squad and a gap had come to exist between the 1st and 2d squads.

[1] That is, the nose of high ground, north of the draw, as this curved eastward and dwindled to a ravine.

[2] This draw is the ravine running east.

[1] That is, the part of the platoon on lower ground, in the draw.

I attempted four times to get to them, but I could not make it and I could not get to Murphy (Destafano's second in command), because the enemy fire was out in front of me. Everywhere I go they shoot. I believe Tokio designated this particular sniper just to shoot at me that day. I yelled my brains off at Murphy; no soap. Finally I got back to my little CP and called Captain O'Brien on the radio to tell him that I could not withdraw Sergeant Murphy's squad because I could not get to him. Little did I know that Murphy was having one hell of a time in the sector where he was. Captain O'Brien told me to stay put till Murphy got out. From there on it is Murphy's story.

Murphy was Sgt. James R. Murphy, one of several men by that name in the company. He was called "Spanish" Murphy due to the fact that he was born in Los Angeles of Spanish parents who, several generations before, had somewhere adopted the Irish name. Murphy was a wiry, dark-skinned little man who spoke in a strongly accented tongue and in moments of excitement was more than likely to lapse into fluent Spanish.

Sergeant Murphy was with Destafano's squad. As originally constituted at the time of the attack on the afternoon of 6 July, this squad was composed of nine men, of whom three, Destafano, Lees, and Fitzpatrick, were now casualties. One of the other six, the Private Sharkey mentioned by Medina, had been wounded early and was lying helpless. The five men remaining were far enough over the crest of the north wall of Harakiri Gulch to be out of the line of fire of the enemy in the trenches below. As a result, Sergeant Murphy had kept pushing his men forward without realizing that the rest of the platoon on his left, and Company C on his right, had been pinned down. After moving 40 to 50 yards forward, he stopped and ordered two of his men, Pfc. William Drew and Pvt. Raymond Johnson, to creep up to the crest of the ridge and look over into the valley to see what the situation was below. By this time the five men had moved out far enough so that they were well along the high ground, which dropped off into Harakiri Gulch on their immediate left in a system of ledges that went almost straight down. When Drew and Johnson had managed to creep up to the crest of this ridge and look over, they found themselves staring down at 30 or 40 Japanese in trenches below them. These enemy soldiers were armed with machine guns and rifles and were very methodically firing at the rest of Company A further up the valley. Drew and Johnson pulled out grenades and rolled them down the hill, but in both cases the missiles were caught in the folds of the ground and exploded harmlessly. The two men next tried throwing them, but this did no good either. By this time the enemy had become aware of their presence and had taken the skyline under fire. Neither of the two men could lift his head.

Farther back, near Murphy, was Pvt. John Shuart, rifle grenadier of the platoon. Shuart had evidently been watching the two men up forward with their grenades because, when they were pinned down by the fire, he moved forward. He talked briefly with Drew and Johnson, found out the situation below, and then moved out into the fire to the rim of the gorge where he could see what was going on below. Shuart moved very deliberately, crawling along the edge of the hill until he came to a tree. He turned to Drew and Johnson and yelled that he'd found a place

from which his grenade discharger would be effective. He loaded his piece and got to his knee, taking aim. At that moment an enemy bullet hit him squarely in the heart and he dropped over dead.

It was during this time that Sergeant Medina attempted to tell Murphy to withdraw his squad, but without success. When Medina reported his failure to the company commander, Captain O'Brien had finished talking with members of the 1st and 3d Platoons who were withdrawing under his orders. One of these men, Sergeant St. John, had seen where Sergeant Murphy and his men were and thought that perhaps he could reach them by using a route along the ditches and thence up over the ridge through some bushes that grew there. Captain O'Brien gave him permission to try it, and St. John took two men, Pvt. Peter Bolger and Pfc. Harold Brewer, and started out. Using the route that St. John had previously marked out, these men finally reached Murphy almost a half hour later.

In the meantime, however, Murphy had discovered the situation he was in. He realized that he and his five men, one wounded (Sharkey), were isolated and that two of the five, Drew and Johnson, were trapped well out in front of him. He turned his attention first to getting Drew and Johnson in. He sent his one remaining unwounded man out with a BAR to lay down fire on the Jap positions so that they would have to keep their heads down long enough for the two trapped men to get out. The plan worked, and now Murphy asked for volunteers to go back to Captain O'Brien with word on his situation. Private Drew volunteered immediately. Neither Drew nor Murphy knew exactly where the company commander was and neither knew of any safe route to the rear, having been out of sight of the rest of the company when they pulled back. After a careful consultation between the two, they both decided that Drew should go back into the ravine where Company C was supposed to be, work through it, and out the other side. This meant that Drew would come out into open ground for about 100 yards, but both men thought he could make it by running hard.

Drew did get through the ravine all right, but he had no sooner emerged into the open ground, running up the slope towards Hill 721, than he was felled by a shot in the side and mortally wounded. Only one man saw him go down and this was Sgt. Lonnie McIntyre of Company D who had a section of machine guns sitting back up under Hill 721. McIntyre got to his feet and ran down the slope to Drew's aid, but when he got to the wounded man's side, he, too, was seriously hit. Murphy did not know of the loss of his messenger, but kept waiting for someone to come back from Captain O'Brien. When St. John and his party arrived some time later, Murphy assumed that they were the result of his message and asked no questions. With the help of St. John's three men, Sharkey was dragged down the hill to the trench system and Murphy's little party was withdrawn. By the time that Company A was all reassembled at the entrance to the gulch it was well after 1500, and not until an hour later did Murphy realize that Drew had been hit. At almost the same time, Company D reported that Sergeant McIntyre had

not returned after his dash down the hill. By that time the situation in front of the battalion was well known, and Captain O'Brien would not risk losing more men in a search for the two wounded men. He did authorize a night patrol of volunteers, and shortly after dark eight men under Lieutenant Masem and 2d Lt. Robert W. Chester of Company D moved some 600 yards back down into Harakiri Gulch. They found Drew and McIntyre still alive and huddled in the bushes. Both men had given up hope of being rescued and were in bad condition. Drew died just after he reached the aid station, but McIntyre lived.

One factor contributing to the troubles of Company A was its lack of support on either flank. To its right, C (165th) had to approach the narrow ravine (running east from the main draw) over down-hill ground without any cover from enemy fire on the plateau. Only one of C's platoons was in position to help Company A, and this platoon was delayed in starting until after A had been repulsed. As a result, the platoon made what amounted to a lone effort and was shot to pieces on the open hillside. Further northeast, the 2d Battalion of the 165th found it impossible to get into Paradise Valley in their own zone, received permission to use the 1st Battalion's zone, and (since the 1st had made no progress) was stalled the rest of the day.

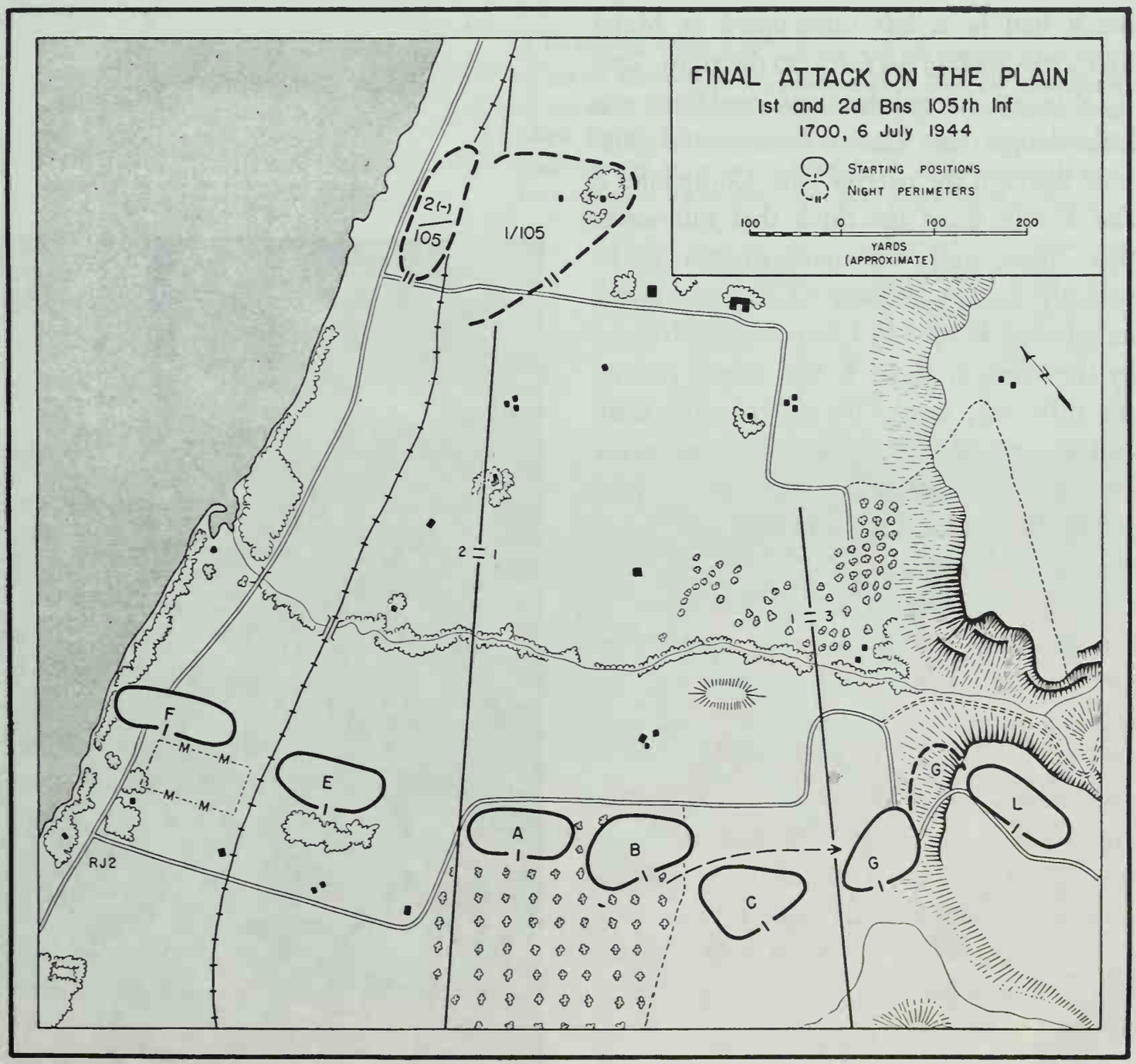
Lower down Harakiri Gulch, the 3d Battalion of the 105th failed to get into the draw, or even to get enough pressure on the enemy to help A's attack at the head of the draw. Company I, next to O'Brien, moved off at 1200 when the whole line made its attack, but after moving 75 yards down into the gulch began receiving sniper fire that pinned most of the company down on the hillside unable to move. Capt. Ashley W. Brown, in command of the company, tried to work small patrols forward to locate the source of this fire, but before the patrols got back Company A, 165th Infantry on Brown's immediate right, had become involved in the full-scale battle already described. Brown held his men on the hillside with no further attempts to descend further into the gulch. At 1600, he withdrew his company to the top of the hill and dug in for the night, tied in with Company A on the right and Company L, 105th Infantry on the left.

Company L had not moved a yard all afternoon. All of his efforts to penetrate Harakiri Gulch during the morning having failed, Captain Spaulding decided that it would be a useless waste of men to attempt again to push through the gulch until he had accurately located and eliminated the source of fire that caught his men coming down over the nose. Furthermore, his tanks had left him just before the attack was scheduled to move off, and without their mobile fire support he could do little. He did, however, order several small patrols to creep up to the edge of the gulch and take points of observation from which they were to see if they could locate some of the enemy positions. One of these patrols was just starting out when the gigantic explosion occurred in front of Company K, and, although they were almost 300 yards away and behind a hill, two Company L men were wounded seriously by falling debris. A little later, at approximately the time Company A, 165th Infantry

was running into their trouble below, Sergeant Heidelberger, who was manning one of the observation posts, was killed by the intense rifle fire that still continued to pour over the south wall of the canyon. Only a few minutes later Pfc. Herman C. Kutch was killed in the same fashion. At the close of the afternoon, Company L was still waiting for a chance to move.

Shifting the Division's effort to the hills in the afternoon attack had thus failed to accomplish any gains. Two battalions of the 106th (1st and 3d) had moved up behind the 165th, and spent the day near Hill 767 waiting for possible employment. There was no chance for their use until too late in the day to be worth-while.

*MAP NO. 8*



### *Afternoon: Plans for a New Attack (105th Infantry)*

After Company K was relieved at the coconut grove and went into reserve for the 3d Battalion's effort at the gulch, the 2d Battalion of the 105th held the Tanapag Plain, all three companies in line. Company G was at the grove, F was on the open ground to the left, and E was just south of the railroad track. The zone from the rail line to the beach had been left unoccupied as Major McCarthy shifted his forces to the right. Two BAR teams covered this flank, and there was little danger that enemy forces could infiltrate through the narrow gap. Companies E and F still faced the ditch that ran across their front and was now known to be strongly held. Company G had completed its relief of K by 1340, and was confronted by the same problem K had faced: passing the little rise, some 200 yards to the front and dominated by Japanese positions on the cliffs. While waiting for G to get in line, Major McCarthy had bent every effort to getting the minefield cleared up so that tanks could reach the ditch; at the same time E and F were inching their way forward on their stomachs in an effort to come close enough for a direct assault. They had been able to make about 25 yards by 1400.

After another hour brought no change on the plain, Division Headquarters intervened. At 1520 General Griner issued an order by telephone to Colonel Bishop, commanding the 105th. He was directed to commit his reserve battalion, the 1st, on the right of the 2d. It was to attack toward an objective on the beach 1,200 yards beyond Road Junction 2 (Map No. 8, page 99).

Lt. Col. Wm. J. O'Brien, commanding the 1st Battalion, received orders to report to the regimental CP at 1530; he alerted his battalion for movement, and the executive officer was ordered to get the men under way toward the front. They had 2,000 yards to cover before they could reach their position in line. At Regiment, Colonel O'Brien was

told to move into line with all three companies abreast, but with the right company (C) echeloned to the rear. The 2d Battalion would shift its units north to make room on the right of the plain. This was to be accomplished by moving Company F back around E to the beach strip, while Company G, at the coconut grove, would be attached to the 3d Battalion to carry out a most important mission. Captain Olander was to swing this company across the mouth of Harakiri Gulch, pivoting on his right wing, to contain the enemy in the gulch and protect the rear of the 1st Battalion's advance. Next day, the isolated Japanese in the gulch were to be mopped up by the 3d Battalion.

The 2d Battalion, in its narrowed zone, was reorganizing to take part in the new attack on the plain. Before it was ready to go, a small tank action took place that was to

A PAUSE IN THE BATTLE *north of the coconut grove. Men of the 3d Battalion, 105th Infantry are waiting for resumption of the attack (afternoon, 6 July). The view is taken toward the shore. Japanese fire from hillside (off to right) was evidently under control, as crews are bringing up 37-mm antitank guns for use against cliff positions, and soldiers are sitting in the open.*

have a considerable effect on the afternoon's battle.

At 1530, Lieutenant Dorey returned to the 2d Battalion front with three vehicles; he had spent the early afternoon back at the maintenance dump, refueling and resupplying. Reporting at the coconut grove, Dorey found that Company G would not be ready to use the vehicles for some time. On his own initiative, Lieutenant Dorey moved down toward Road Junction 2 in search of a mission. When he arrived at Company E, the minefield had at last been cleared up on that sector and the way was open to the ditch line which had stopped the morning attack. Dorey decided to wander out and see what he could find in the lower end of the ditch facing the 2d Battalion. He discovered on approaching it that the ditch was literally full of Japanese, and returned at once to report to Captain Smith of Company E. Smith wasn't ready yet to start his attack, so Dorey went back with his three tanks. For over half an hour, Dorey's vehicles moved up and down the ditch, as far east as the cliffs, driving the enemy into corners and then slaughtering them with canister and machine-gun fire.

Enemy opposition was ineffective after one attempt to knock out the tanks by magnetic mines. During the first turn up the ditch, some Japanese infantry managed to get a mine against a light tank, commanded by Sergeant Alloco, and blew off its track. Dorey tried to combine the job of evacuating Alloco's crew with the attack on the trench. Leaving his third tank to cover Alloco, Dorey went on alone with the offensive along the ditch. In the end, despite Dorey's effort, Alloco and his assistant driver were killed, and the light tank had to be destroyed.

But the enemy positions in the northern and deeper end of the ditch had been, to all intents and purposes, wiped out. When Companies E and F were finally ready to go, at 1700, they were able to stand up and walk forward for the first time since they had started past Road Junction 2. They found the trench littered with dead Japanese, and credited Dorey with wiping out 100 to 150 enemy. Those left were disorganized and demoralized by the time the infantry attack was launched.

### *Advance of the First Battalion (105th Infantry)*

Colonel O'Brien, commander of the 1st Battalion, was a notably aggressive officer and had twice led his battalion in rapid and important advances during the Saipan battle. On 6 July, characteristically, he had his battalion under way before he knew its mission, so that by the time his orders were defined the men were well up toward the front. O'Brien had then picked up his company commanders and driven them forward to the coconut grove for a briefing on the ground. As he outlined to them his plans for the attack, O'Brien stressed the necessity of "keeping going. The Old Man wants us on the beach for the night, and we will be there."

The 1st Battalion was in line before 1645, and, with the 2d on its left, spent 30 minutes in resupplying and reorganizing. At 1715 the two battalions moved off in a coordinated attack, with the main effort in the 1st Battalion's zone. The 1st Battalion's left

boundary angled on a long diagonal toward the beach, pinching out the 2d Battalion and leaving it a relatively small zone to advance through. The going, for the units on line, was to be progressively tougher from left to right.

Company A was O'Brien's left wing and moved out rapidly with two platoons abreast from the road in front of the coconut grove. Mortar fire had preceded the attack, but artillery was used only lightly, on points some distance up the plain. Lieutenant Dorey's two tanks were still tied up in the attempt to rescue Alloco's vehicle. No other tanks were present, although shortly after the jump-off a platoon of self-propelled guns came up from the Cannon Company to the coconut grove, and later gave direct fire support to Company C.

Company A's attack progressed rapidly for the first 150–200 yards, against the lightest kind of opposition. An occasional shot

CP OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 105TH INFANTRY. *Lt. Col. William J. O'Brien (center) is issuing orders to his staff and company commanders just before the attack of 1st Bn. (afternoon of 6 July). The place is Tanapag village, beside an enemy fuel tank.*

rang out from the hills on the extreme right and one or two came from directly forward. The men were practically running across the open ground, although Capt. Louis F. Ackerman had ordered them to move by bounds. The first halt in the company's advance came at the ditch which had caused so much trouble all day. Here, the right platoon encountered a nest of 15 to 20 Japanese. Some of these were wounded and some were trying to hide from Dorey's tank fire by hugging the walls of the trench on the near side. These enemy were surprised by the sudden appearance of the infantry. Ackerman's men waded into the ditch with bayonets and knives. For 20 minutes a sharp hand-to-hand fight ensued, and then the pocket had been cleaned out. The men of Company A moved on forward, across the ditch, and on a diagonal toward the beach. Japanese fire from the hills on the right was becoming more serious, machine guns having taken up the fire, but the company commander urged his men ahead. Spectators in the 165th Infantry OP on Hill 721 could look down on the plain and see a rapidly advancing wave of men in one long skirmish line pushing across the level ground. Lt. Col. Leslie R. Rock of the 4th Marine Division, who was attached to the 165th Infantry as liaison offi-

THE DITCH THAT DOREY CLEANED UP *ran from the edge of the hill (background) down to the sea. Lt. Dorey, with a light tank, enfiladed the enemy in this position, which had held up the 2d Battalion, 105th Infantry during morning of 6 July. Photo, taken 8 July, near the narrow-gauge railroad, shows bodies still there.*

cer, was moved to remark to his superiors at the time, "The 105th has broken through. They're going a mile a minute up the island and if they go as fast as they are now, they'll be in Makunsha in about twenty minutes. They're all over the place. This looks like the end."

The headlong rush of Company A continued for 500 yards beyond the ditch. Then fire again began coming from the front. Captain Ackerman halted his men and waited to see where the fire was coming from. Directly ahead there was a small house and a little stone building that might have been a cistern or a stable. There were snipers in the house. Two men, Pfc. Joseph S. Jarosewicz and Pfc. Frank N. Saetes, moved on to try to rout out the enemy riflemen, while the rest of the company waited. Saetes turned his BAR on the under part of the house while Jarosewicz crept forward and slipped a grenade under the floor. The grenade came flying back out and landed at Saetes' feet where it exploded, wounding Saetes severely in the legs. While Jarosewicz had been looking for the place to throw the grenade, Saetes had cautiously approached the house and was holding his BAR in one hand while he tried to light the straw of the roof with a match he held in the other.

Captain Ackerman now ordered two more men forward, and Sgt. Cleo B. Dickey moved up and walked boldly in the front door. A moment later he had killed at least one of the snipers and wounded another. While he was doing this, Tech. 4 Hermans, the company cook, stepped up and set the house on fire. This time it burned. The one live Japanese in the house got off a last shot,

CAPT. LOUIS F. ACKERMAN
*Commander of Company A, 105th Infantry*

wounding Saetes again while he was being carried back out of the way. Throughout this whole episode the fire from the side of the hill had been getting heavier. It was now almost 1800, less than an hour to darkness.

While Ackerman and Company A were busy trying to burn down the house, Company B came abreast on the right and took cover on the ground to wait, trying to find some protection from the machine guns in the cliff. This company had advanced almost as rapidly as Company A, but being closer to the cliffs had suffered more from the harassing fire which landed in their zone of action in some volume. Capt. Richard F. Ryan had finally been forced to move his men by short bounds, but by constant encouragement and urging he had managed to

keep the company well abreast of Ackerman. Only one man had been wounded during the advance.

When Company A had been held up the second time, Ryan ordered his men to dig in as well as they could and then ordered his 1st Platoon, accompanied by two light machine guns, out to his extreme right flank. Here they built up a defensive line facing the cliffs, and the machine guns began laying down fire all along the hillside. This seemed to stimulate the Japanese, for within a few minutes the enemy fire had doubled in intensity. Two of Ryan's machine gunners were wounded in the new and heavier fire.

In view of this increased enemy activity, which was becoming serious, Captain Ryan went over to Company A and talked with Captain Ackerman. Both company commanders decided to send out a strong patrol, composed of members of both companies, in an effort to knock out at least the nearest machine gun. Just after this decision was made, however, Colonel O'Brien came running up from the coconut grove to find out what was holding up the advance. He sympathized with the two men, but insisted that the battalion should move forward. He had no sooner given this order than a shot killed Captain Ryan at his side. 1st Lt. Hugh P. King now assumed command of Company B and, acting in accordance with O'Brien's orders, canceled the patrol and made ready to move forward. Colonel O'Brien had brought an SPM forward with him and this was used to demolish the concrete building. An advance of another 100 yards was then made before the battalion commander called a halt for the day.

While Companies A and B had pushed home their assault with rapidity, Company C, following along behind Company B's right rear, had run into considerable trouble. Their route of approach led this unit directly along beneath the cliffs where the enemy were holed up. Almost from the time he pushed off from the road, 1st Lt. Bernard A. Tougaw's unit was under direct, heavy, small-arms fire, but mindful of Colonel O'Brien's instructions he ordered his men to keep moving. The company commander was using a peculiar formation to execute his mission. Each rifle squad was deployed as skirmishers, but each platoon was formed into a triangle. The company itself formed a huge diamond, with the 1st platoon at the leading point of the diamond, the 2d on the right side, the 3d on the left, and the Weapons bringing up the rear. Just as the company moved out from the road one man was wounded by the heavy fire which came from the northeast nose of the entrance to Harakiri Gulch. They also received fire from the machine guns atop the little knoll to their direct front. These were the same guns that Dorey's tank fire had driven the Japanese

CLIFF WALLS *at foot of hill bordering coastal plain, between Harakiri Gulch and Paradise Valley. Marines are blasting out enemy snipers from a cave position (8 July). From such positions, up and down the hillside, the 105th Infantry received flanking fire in its attempts to drive along the Tanapag Plain (5 and 6 July).*

from earlier in the day, and the same guns Lieutenant Peyre had worked so diligently to keep the enemy from using before K was relieved at noon. The men of Company C could plainly see the Japanese soldiers manning the positions. The American fire was fairly heavy on the area, but the Japanese had evidently formed relays to serve the guns, out of a group of about 30 men. These enemy soldiers were hiding in a cave in the cliff, connected with the ditch running down toward the beach and passing just behind the knoll. The men of Company C would see one of the Japanese run pell-mell out of the cave, and do a beautiful baseball slide that ended up under the gun. Then he would squeeze off one or two short bursts at the leading platoon and roll down the knoll in back, out of sight. Here they may have picked themselves up and crawled back into the cave to await their turn again. This system was so arranged that they did not use the two guns in any regular order; it was impossible to tell just which of the two weapons they would run for. Tech/Sgt. Ralph N. Gannaway, in command of the 1st Platoon, ordered his men to lie prone on the ground, and assigned half the platoon to watching each gun. In this manner, every time a Japanese popped over the horizon, one of Gannaway's men picked him off. Gannaway said later the Japanese "just couldn't seem to realize what was happening. They kept right on coming at the guns until they were all dead." Colonel O'Brien, who at the time was in the coconut grove not far away, watched the whole spectacle, and about halfway through it he sent over one of his SPM's that had just come up and ordered them to fire into the cave. However, the SPM fired only one round, which scored a direct hit on one of the Japanese coming at the guns. This evidently satisfied the vehicle crew and they moved off up the same plain toward which Companies A and B had gone. Lieutenant Dorey and his tank also took a hand in the proceedings, from farther down the ditch, but with little effectiveness.

When the Japanese stopped coming toward the gun, Gannaway decided that it would be safe to assault the position. Three men, Pfc. Irvin A. George, Pvt. Harold L. Peterson, and Pfc. Robert L. Jones, volunteered to rush the guns. All three got up and ran full speed up the little knoll to a point where they could look directly down into the ditch, almost at the point where it connected with the cave. They found several Japanese trying to hide in the ditch. For the next two or three minutes these three men engaged in a fire fight at point-blank range. But they were heavily outnumbered, and when Jones received a face wound Gannaway ordered them to get back to the platoon. Shortly after this move was accomplished, the Japanese from the caves loosed a shower of grenades into the midst of the platoon. Gannaway ordered the men to withdraw out of range. Leaving S/Sgt. Raymond G. Norden in charge, he told Norden to hold while he went back to the battalion CP and tried to get an SPM to come up and help.

While Gannaway and the 1st Platoon had been engaged with the Japanese in the ditch, Lieutenant Tougaw with the 3d Platoon, the Weapons, and Company Headquarters had been moving on forward. Tougaw had been following O'Brien's orders to

keep moving no matter what happened; when Gannaway had stopped to take care of the knoll, the company commander had taken the left platoon and the trailing elements, sideslipped to the left, and bypassed the knoll to follow the battalion assault. The 2d Platoon, which was echeloned to Gannaway's right rear, was even closer to the cliffs than the 1st Platoon, but took no part in the action at the knoll. When the 1st Platoon stopped, they also halted. This left Gannaway with two platoons at the rear, while Tougaw with the rest of the company had pushed on forward.

Gannaway had no sooner given Sergeant Norden charge of the platoon than Norden received a radio call from Tougaw, who wanted to know where the other platoons were and why they weren't moving. Lieutenant Tougaw was extremely put out about the failure of Gannaway to move forward. It was now 1830 and the rest of the battalion was already digging in for the night, with darkness only half an hour away. Norden tried to explain the situation to the company commander, but, when Tougaw asked what the 2d Platoon was doing, Norden didn't know. Tougaw thereupon ordered Norden to bring the 2d Platoon and come forward at once. The 1st Platoon could move up as soon as they cleaned up the pocket they were facing at the knoll. Norden did as he was ordered, moving the 2d Platoon back and around the 1st.

This left the 1st Platoon by itself to face a strong enemy group. The Japanese were very obviously getting added strength, but no one knew from where. For the next 45 minutes all Gannaway's men, lying on

T/SGT. CHARLES GANNAWAY
*of Company C, 105th Infantry*

the ground, engaged in a vicious fire fight with the enemy in the trench not 30 yards away. Darkness came and the fight continued, with both sides using every possible weapon, grenades, rifles, and machine guns. Three of the Americans were hit, two by grenade fragments. One of them was an acting staff sergeant, the other a squad leader who was knocked unconscious and caused a good deal of trouble in the efforts to evacuate him.

A few minutes after dark, Gannaway's efforts to get an SPM bore fruit; one of the vehicles reported to the platoon and from 40 yards away proceeded to pour howitzer shells into the Japanese positions. While the SPM was at work, Gannaway had taken a small

patrol forward to look for Lieutenant Tougaw, explain what was happening, and calm the company commander's ire, but in the darkness the platoon sergeant was unable to find anyone. While he was gone, S/Sgt. Frederick A. Westlake, whom he had left in charge of the platoon, received another irate call on the radio from Tougaw who told him in no uncertain terms to get forward. Westlake assured him he would just as soon as he could get his wounded men evacuated. Tougaw called the Battalion CP and asked that aid men be sent over to help in this evacuation.[1] At the time the battalion aid station received this call, they were in the process of moving forward from the coconut grove to the new battalion perimeter, and the carrying party that went out looking for Westlake could not find him. After waiting some time for this party to come, Westlake finally gave up. He talked with the driver of the SPM and finally got a ride for Jones back as far as the Regimental CP. Pvt. Paul A. Flessenkemper, who had suffered multiple wounds in the legs from grenade fragments during the fire fight, voluntarily walked all the way back through the coconut grove in the darkness to the 3d Battalion aid station, where he managed to hitch a ride on a medical jeep to the regimental aid station. Westlake and one of his men carried French back to the coconut grove, where they hailed a passing medical jeep and got French aboard and out of the way. Westlake, then, after all this delay, ordered his platoon to move up in the darkness and join the rest of the company. By moving all the way over to the railroad tracks and following them north, the platoon managed to find Tougaw and the rest of the company by 2100. Before they left the pocket which had caused them so much trouble, it had been virtually wiped out by the action of the SPM.

It will be remembered that Company G, attached to the 3d Battalion, had the mission of guarding the flank facing Harakiri Gulch during the attack. Captain Olander's task was to swing his unit across the mouth of the gulch, and so bottle up the Japanese in that corridor.

Olander's men were in the coconut grove at the opening of the attack; he moved them out in single file to the cross-island highway, in the shelter of the ridge on which Company L was still immobilized. Around the corner of this ridge was the entrance to the gulch. Olander assembled the company near the sharp hairpin turn in the highway, established contact with L, above, and set out alone to make a personal reconnaissance of the mouth of the draw. Ahead of him, the nearer leg of the hairpin curve skirted the nose of sloping ground that marked the end of the west wall of the gulch; from this leg, the trail branched off the road and led up into the draw. Just short of the junction was the tank lost by Lieutenant Ganio earlier in the day, tipped over in the ditch. Within the U of the hairpin turn was a small pocket of extremely rough terrain, covered with brush

[1] It may be well at this point to call attention to a feature of this action which is characteristic of fighting in the Pacific: as this day's story shows at several points, evacuation of the wounded often caused serious delays during attacks. Unit commanders were aware of, and disturbed by, the tendency of men to halt an advance to see that wounded were safely taken back. Measures to prevent this were difficult to enforce. Two features of Pacific fighting differentiated it from that in Europe: the Japanese fought on in suicidal fashion if bypassed, even very small groups or individuals: and they killed wounded men without mercy. U.S. soldiers were aware of this and felt strongly about leaving wounded comrades in the wake of an advance, to fall victims to any bypassed enemy snipers.

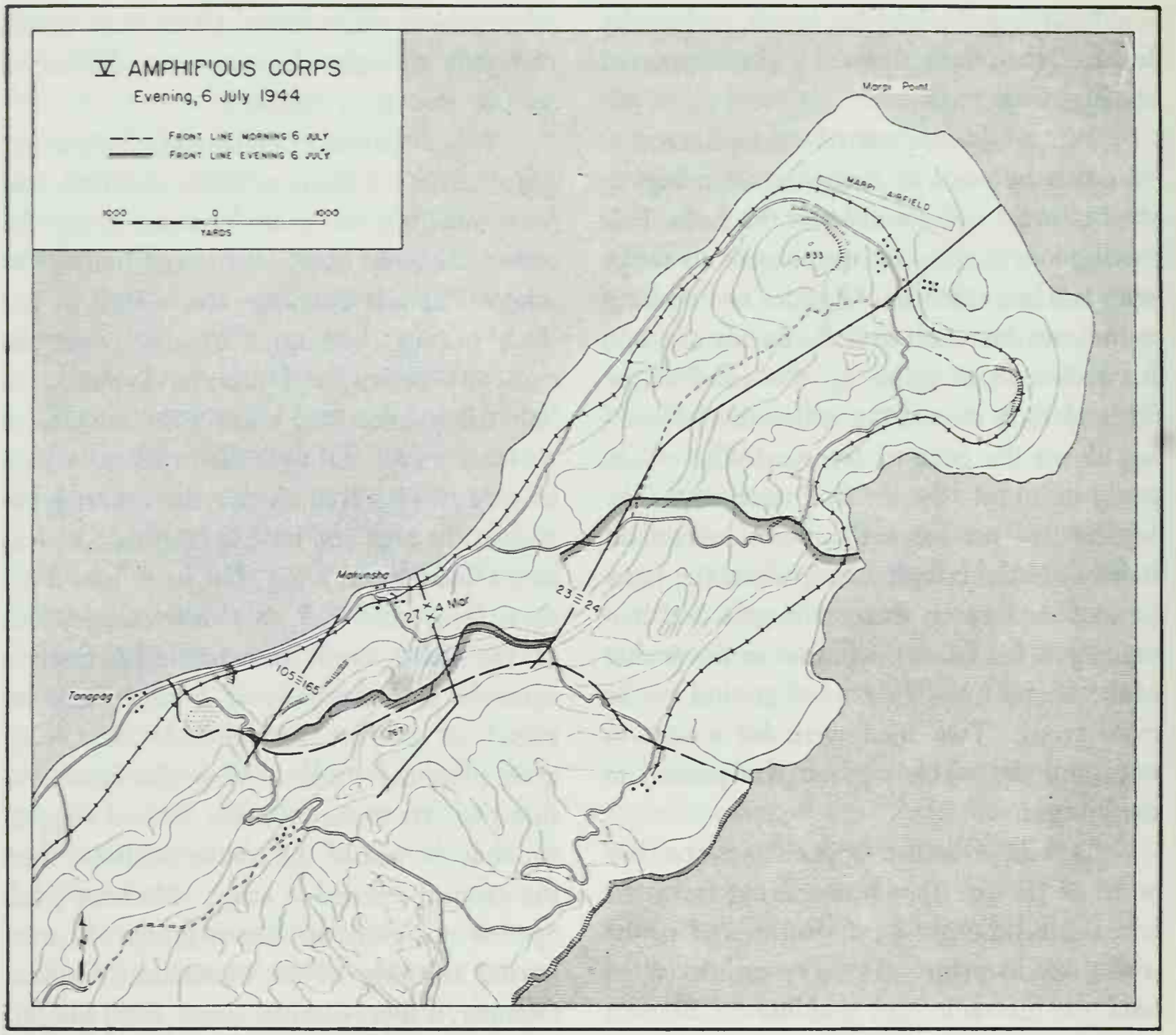
and bushes, and somewhat lower, perhaps by five feet, than the little shelf which supported the highway.

When Olander started out on his reconnaissance he sneaked along the ditch edging the highway, and got as far as the tank. Following him at a short interval were his radioman and one rifleman. Olander saw nothing to indicate the presence of the enemy and told his radioman to move up the 1st Platoon. This platoon moved out immediately, coming down the edge of the road where they could jump into the ditch, if necessary. The leaders had not reached a point more than halfway to the crippled tank when the Japanese opened up on them with rifle and machine-gun fire from the bushes in the pocket of the U and from the nose of ground on the right front. Two men were hit almost at once and the whole platoon was pinned to the ground.

Captain Olander appeared to be forward of the fire that was coming from the left, behind the fire on the right, and in the midst of the enemy. He very calmly called back on his radio and told his 2d Platoon to move up on the high ground and his 3d Platoon to move into the area below the hairpin. From there they were to be prepared to support the advance of the 1st Platoon by fire on the suspected areas.

The execution of this order consumed approximately 20 minutes; it was now after 1800 and darkness was rapidly approaching. The enemy fire had died down completely as soon as the 1st Platoon gave evidence that they were not trying to move. Captain Olander had used the time to poke around in the bushes below the road, trying to find out where the enemy were. (The men in his company thought this was very foolish, a sure invitation to suicide.)

S/Sgt. Edward J. Wojcicki, platoon sergeant of the 3d Platoon, below the road, had been working his men forward along the lower ditch and had gotten about halfway to where Captain Olander was visible in the dusk, beating the bushes. At that point, the company commander ordered Wojcicki to halt the platoon and come forward with a six-man patrol through the brush to where he was. Wojcicki knew that there were Japanese in the area and he said later that he was sure Olander was crazy, but he followed orders. The men had no sooner stepped out of the ditch than they found themselves squarely in the middle of a large Japanese patrol or outpost which had been lying quietly in the bushes. Wojcicki later said that the first thing he knew he had stepped squarely on one of the enemy soldiers; then the ground seemed to erupt. Machine guns opened up, grenades began going off, men started running in all directions. Captain Olander, a short distance away, fired his carbine, then used it as a club until he broke it, and finally picked up a saber which he wielded to good effect. Nearly every one of Wojcicki's men were engaged in wrestling or kicking their opponents as well as shooting and bayoneting them. The rest of Company G, who could barely see what was going on in the darkness, did not dare to shoot for fear of hitting their own men. In the furious melee that raged for the next few minutes, two of Wojcicki's men, Pfc. James Messer and Pfc. Vernon Bug, were killed. Another, Sgt. Benjamin J. Drenzek, was wounded four




*MAP NO. 9*

different times. On three occasions Wojcicki's men killed Japanese who were trying to carry Drenzek away, up into the gulch. After the last attempt to kidnap the wounded man, Olander told Wojcicki to get back out of the area. A few minutes later, after he rejoined the company himself, he ordered all the platoons to pull back to the starting point near the bend in the road.

Once here, the company commander called Colonel Bradt on the radio and told him that he didn't think it was possible for him to build the line across the mouth of the gulch, but that he thought he could control it from the nose of ground overlooking Road Junction 64. He was given permission to dig in up on this nose, and moved his company across the road and up onto the higher ground. During the establishment of the perimeter, the company was constantly harassed by machine-gun fire from across the gulch. During this time, Captain Olander

made another personal reconnaissance and spotted an enemy gun in a cave in the opposite wall. He called up a volunteer, Pvt. Joseph F. Kinyone, to fire a bazooka at this position, but as Kinyone moved up to position he was hit by a bullet and killed.

This ended the day's activity for Company G. Once again, no impression had been made on the enemy stronghold in the gulch, and, although the mouth of the canyon was covered by the fire of Company G, there was no solid stopgap to keep the enemy from emerging there in force.

The remainder of the 2d Battalion, Companies E and F, together with most of H and Headquarters Companies, had moved forward in the assault at 1715 with the 1st Battalion. Major McCarthy had placed his Company F on the battalion left, between the beach and the road. Company E had extended from there to the left flank of Company A, across the railroad tracks. The work of Lieutenant Dorey's tanks had had its greatest effect in front of the 2d Battalion. The ditch position which had been the enemy's main strongpoint all across the 2d Battalion front, and which had held up Major McCarthy's advance since he arrived at Road Junction 2, had been very effectively reduced not 30 minutes previous to the time set for the attack. When Company E moved off in the attack it was, therefore, with surprising ease. The men simply got up and walked forward. Within minutes they were at the ditch, and hardly a shot had been fired. At the ditch the men could see without much trouble that Dorey had done effective work. In the words of Sergeant Nicolette, "We had to walk across that ditch on dead Japs." About 20 minutes were spent in mopping up remaining enemy in the ditch, and then the company pushed rapidly on to the north. By 1800 they had advanced several hundred yards, and there held up to tie in with the 1st Battalion on the right and Company F on the left. Company F had almost as easy an advance, although they were delayed by passing a series of pillboxes and dugouts that dotted the beach. No Japanese were encountered in most of these, but each one had to be carefully investigated. Just before reaching the objective, the 3d Platoon, next to the road, did find a shelter occupied by three Japanese. The platoon sergeant and another man were wounded by a grenade which they threw into the shelter and the Japanese threw back out.

The 2d Battalion (less Company G) dug in for the night between the railroad track and the beach. The 1st Battalion was south across the rail line, with a considerable gap on its right flank separating it from Company G at the gulch.

The day had ended in a success for the 27th Division, but the night was to bring disaster. Gathering the bulk of their remaining troops, the Japanese launched their greatest suicidal attack of the war. The banzai charge hit with particular force on the two battalions of the 105th, left by their very advance in an exposed advance position. The enemy's main assault struck along the coastal plain, and it also used Harakiri Gulch as a corridor to hit the gap between Companies C and G. In a matter of a few hours the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 105th, suffering 900 casualties out of 1100–1200 effectives, had virtually ceased to exist as combat units.

SMALL UNIT ACTIONS

# *SANTA MARIA INFANTE*

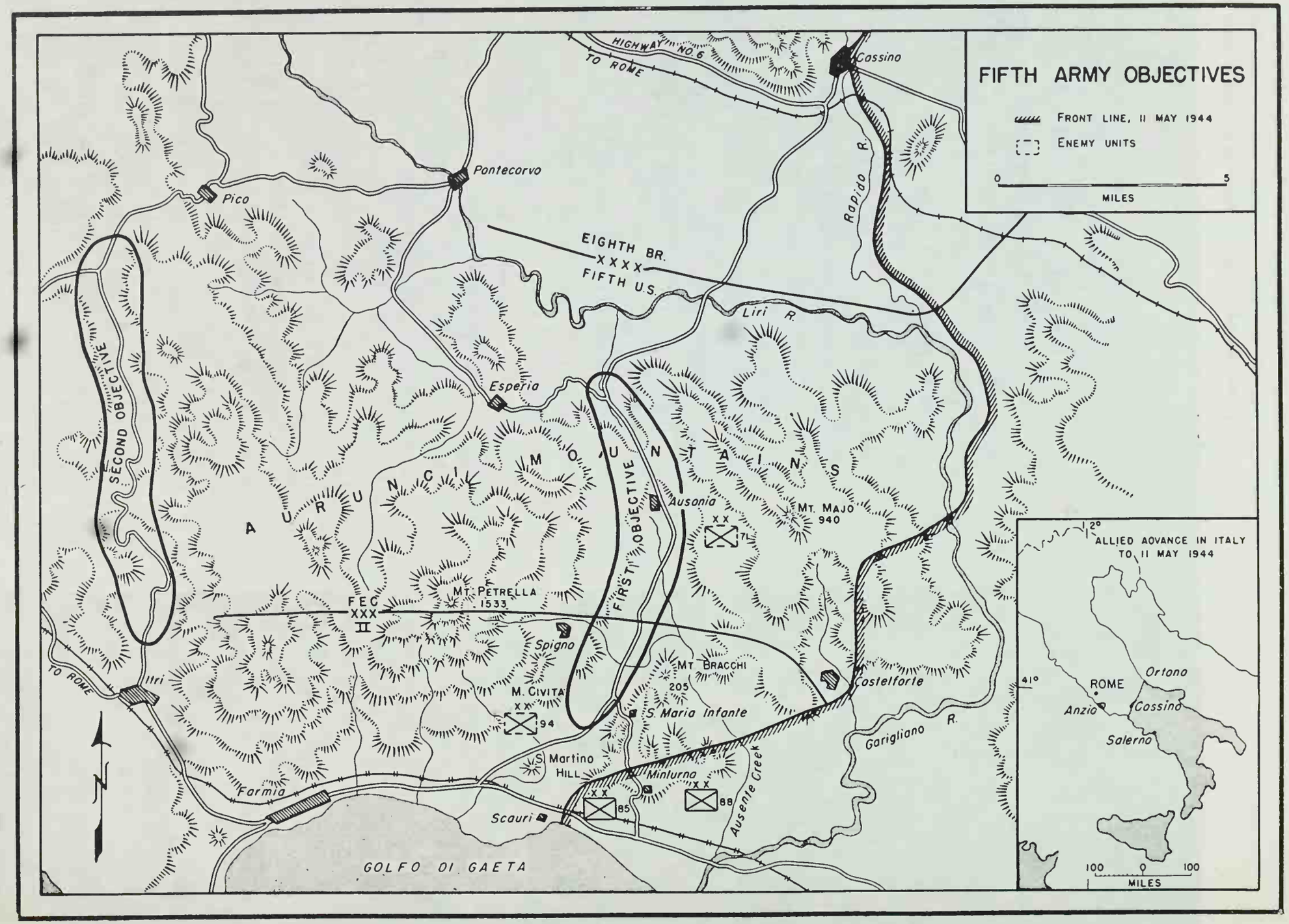
11-14 May 1944

TERRAIN OF FIFTH ARMY'S BATTLE, *looking north toward the Liri Valley. The importance of the Mt. Bracchi hill mass is clearly shown, in relation to the valley leading north to the Liri through Ausonia. (Photo taken April 1946.)*

The battle for Santa Maria Infante was important in the opening of the Allied offensive toward Rome on 11 May 1944. Strong Allied forces were concentrated on the west side of the Italian peninsula to renew an effort stopped by the winter and heavy German resistance. Eighth Army was poised for attack through the Liri Valley along the axis of Highway No. 6; main Fifth Army faced a chain of mountains, in a 13-mile zone from the Liri River to the sea. The forces in the Anzio Beachhead were ready to strike when their opportunity came as a result of progress on the other fronts.

Although Fifth Army's bridgehead across the Garigliano made a dangerous river crossing unnecessary, the Aurunci Mountains, fortified by positions that were part of the enemy's Gustav Line, formed a difficult barrier. On the right were the highest peaks, topped by Mount Majo (940 meters). The Ausonia Valley lying west of this group separates it from another steep mass of mountains, dominated by Mt. Petrella (1,533 meters). Lower hills fronted the army's left wing, but these were known to be heavily defended. The most important formed a triangular wedge at the southern end of the Ausonia Valley; if the Minturno ridge (in our possession) is considered as the base, the hill triangle narrows northward to the highest hill of the feature, Mt. dei Bracchi (205 meters).

To judge by the disposition of their troops, the Germans considered the higher


FIFTH ARMY OBJECTIVES
FRONT LINE, 11 MAY 1944
ENEMY UNITS
0
5
MILES
HIGHWAY NO. 6
TO ROME
Cassino
Pontecorvo
Pico
Rapido R.
EIGHTH BR.
XXXX
FIFTH U.S.
Liri R.
SECOND OBJECTIVE
Esperia
AURUNCI MOUNTAINS
FIRST OBJECTIVE
Ausonia
XX
7
MT. MAJO
940
MT. PETRELLA
1533
FEC
XXX
II
Spigno
MT. BRACCHI
205
M. CIVITA
XX
94
S. Maria Infante
Costelforte
Garigliano R.
S. Martino
HILL
Minturna
XX
88
XX
85
Ausente Creek
Scauri
Formia
TO ROME
Itri
GOLFO DI GAETA
ALLIED ADVANCE IN ITALY
TO 11 MAY 1944
12°
41°
ROME
Ortono
Anzio
Cossino
Salerno
100
0
100
MILES

*MAP NO. 1*

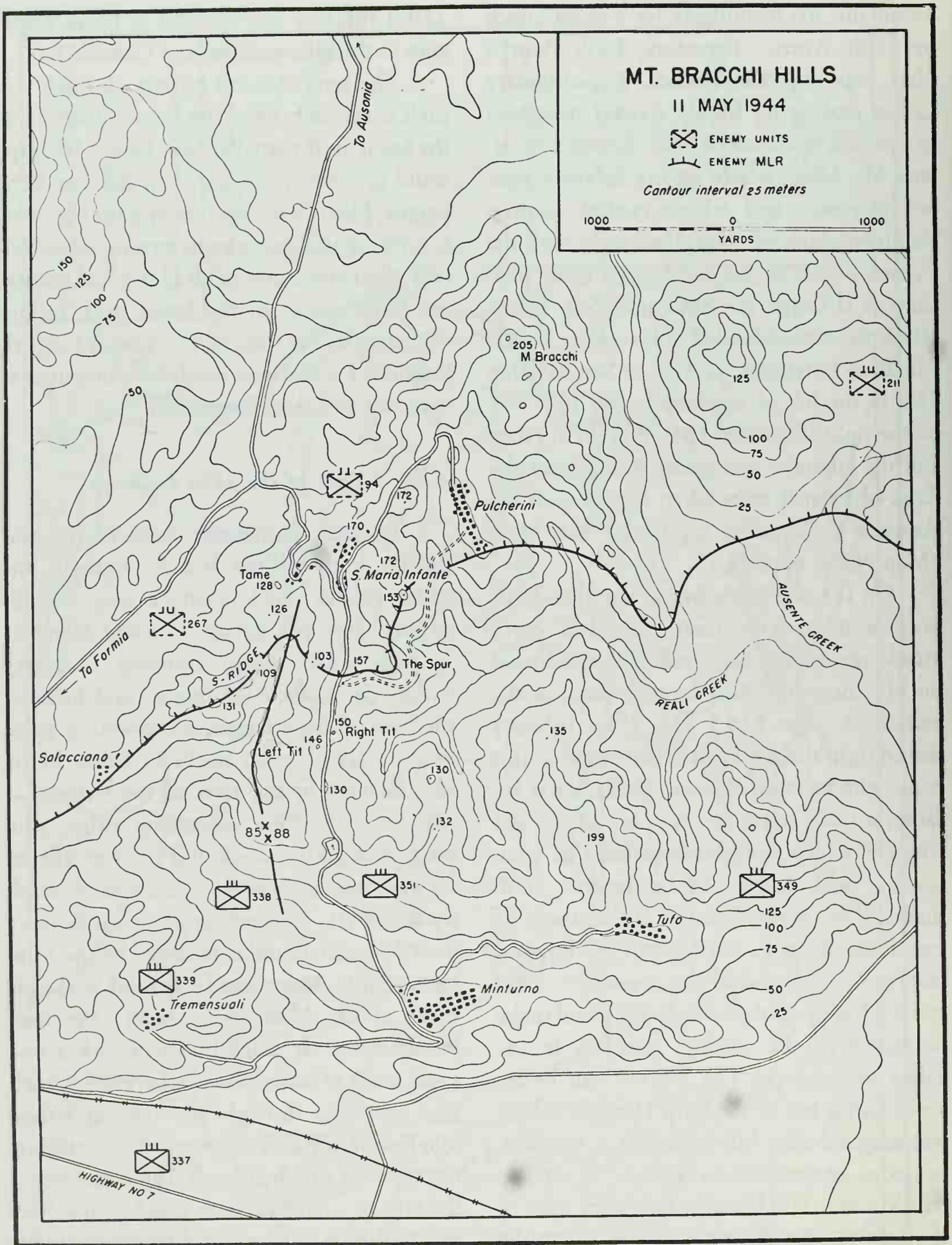
mountains too formidable for a main attack by Fifth Army. Therefore, Fifth Army's plan was for the French Expeditionary Corps, employing highly trained mountain troops and elements of four divisions, to attack Mt. Majo, where enemy defenses were not extensive and where tactical surprise might be obtained. Simultaneously with the French attack to the north, two fresh divisions of II Corps, the 88th and 85th, would attack the well-defended hills making up the Mt. Bracchi triangle, as well as San Martino Hill to the left of the feature and Hill 413 on the right. Capture of Mt. Bracchi in Phase I of the offensive was essential to protect the flank of French units when they crossed the Ausonia Valley after capture of Mt. Majo (Map No. 1, opposite).

On II Corps' right wing, the 88th Division was to carry the main effort of the corps attack against the wedge of hills dominated by Mt. Bracchi. (See the panorama of the battlefield, page 116.) The 351st Infantry would fight the most important battle in this zone, with its main objective Santa Maria Infante, a small town near the top of the hill triangle, which would undoubtedly be tenaciously held. Santa Maria Infante commanded the main German lateral route of communications in the Ausonia Valley, and once our troops gained the town they could easily advance north to Mt. Bracchi and make untenable all the enemy's positions in the valley to the east. The 88th would be assisted on the left by the 85th Division, which was assigned a few hill objectives on the western edge of the Bracchi triangle, as well as San Martino Hill lying in the valley west of the feature. On the right of the 351st, the 350th Infantry was ordered to break resistance in the hills southwest of Castelforte.

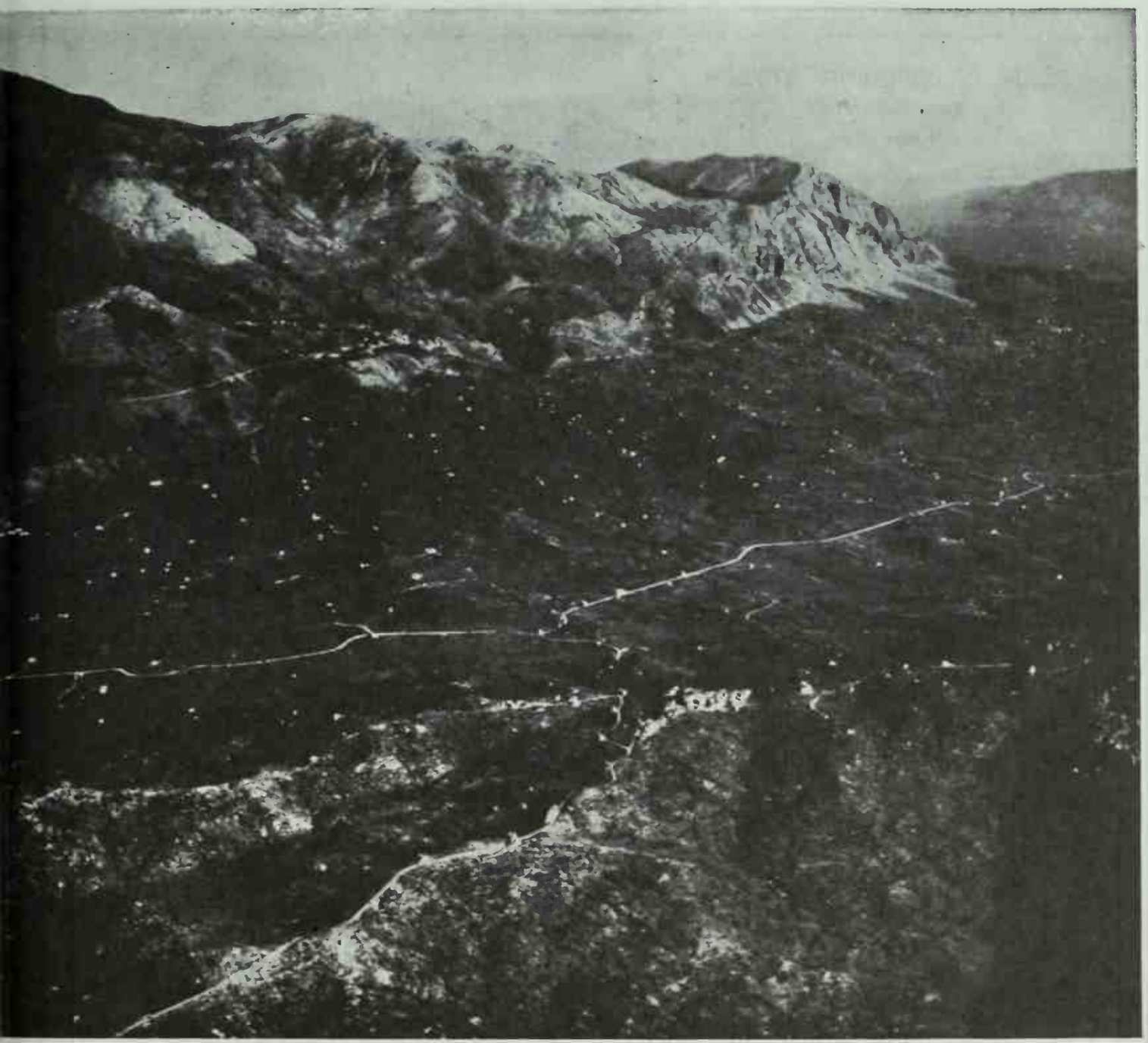
The most difficult terrain on Fifth Army's front confronted the French forces, but the battle in the smaller hills facing II Corps could be slow and bloody. In the past campaigns, Fifth Army had often found it easier to advance in mountainous terrain, where enemy observation and fields of fire had numerous blind spots. In the lower hills, rolling countryside and even slopes afforded superb positions for German machine guns, sited to cover all avenues of approach.

### *Task of the 351st Infantry*

To reach its objective, Santa Maria, near the north tip of the Bracchi triangle, the 351st Infantry had to attack over difficult terrain (Map No. 2, page 120 and Map No. 3, page 122). From east-west Cemetery Ridge, rising above Minturno and forming the base of the triangle, a connecting ridge extends 1,950 yards north to Santa Maria and then on to the apex of the triangle at Mt. Bracchi. This connecting ridge, running through the whole hill mass parallel to its western edge, was to be the axis of attack for the 351st. The crest averages a little more than 125 meters and is followed by the Minturno–Santa Maria road; beyond a double curve at the Minturno cemetery the road winds along the ridge line to a fork a few yards south of Santa Maria, where one branch goes northeast through the town and then into Pulcherini, and the other runs northwest through the tiny hamlet of Tame and down the hills to a junction with the Ausonia–Formia highway. The sides of the north–south

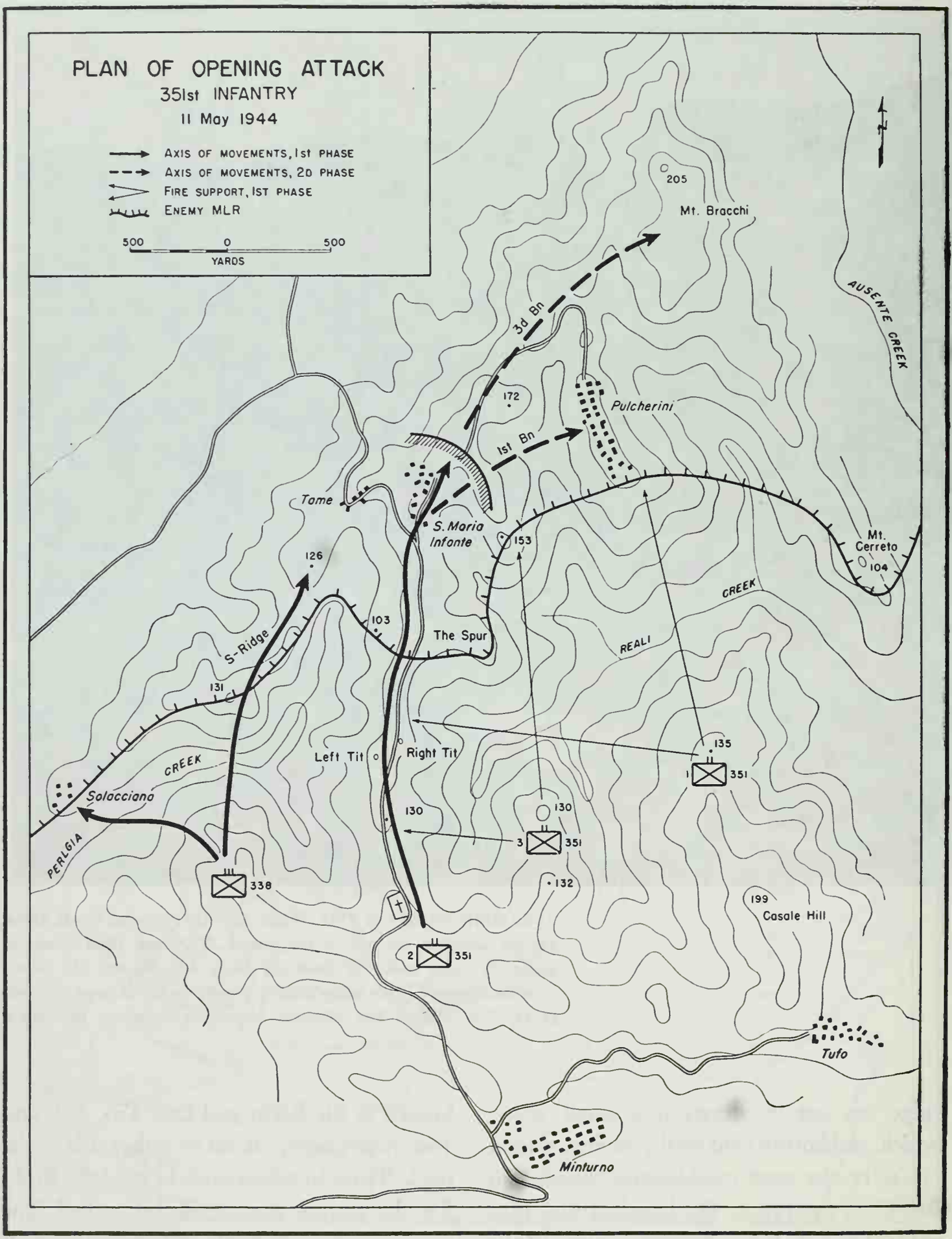

MT. BRACCHI HILLS
11 MAY 1944
ENEMY UNITS
ENEMY MLR
Contour interval 25 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS
To Ausonia
To Formia
M Bracchi
Pulcherini
Tame
S. Maria Infante
The Spur
S-RIDGE
Right Tit
Left Tit
Salacciano
Tufo
Minturno
Tremensuali
AUSENTE CREEK
REALI CREEK
HIGHWAY NO 7
205
211
94
172
170
128
126
153
267
103
157
109
131
150
146
130
132
135
199
85
88
338
351
349
339
337
150
125
100
75
50
25

MAP NO. 2

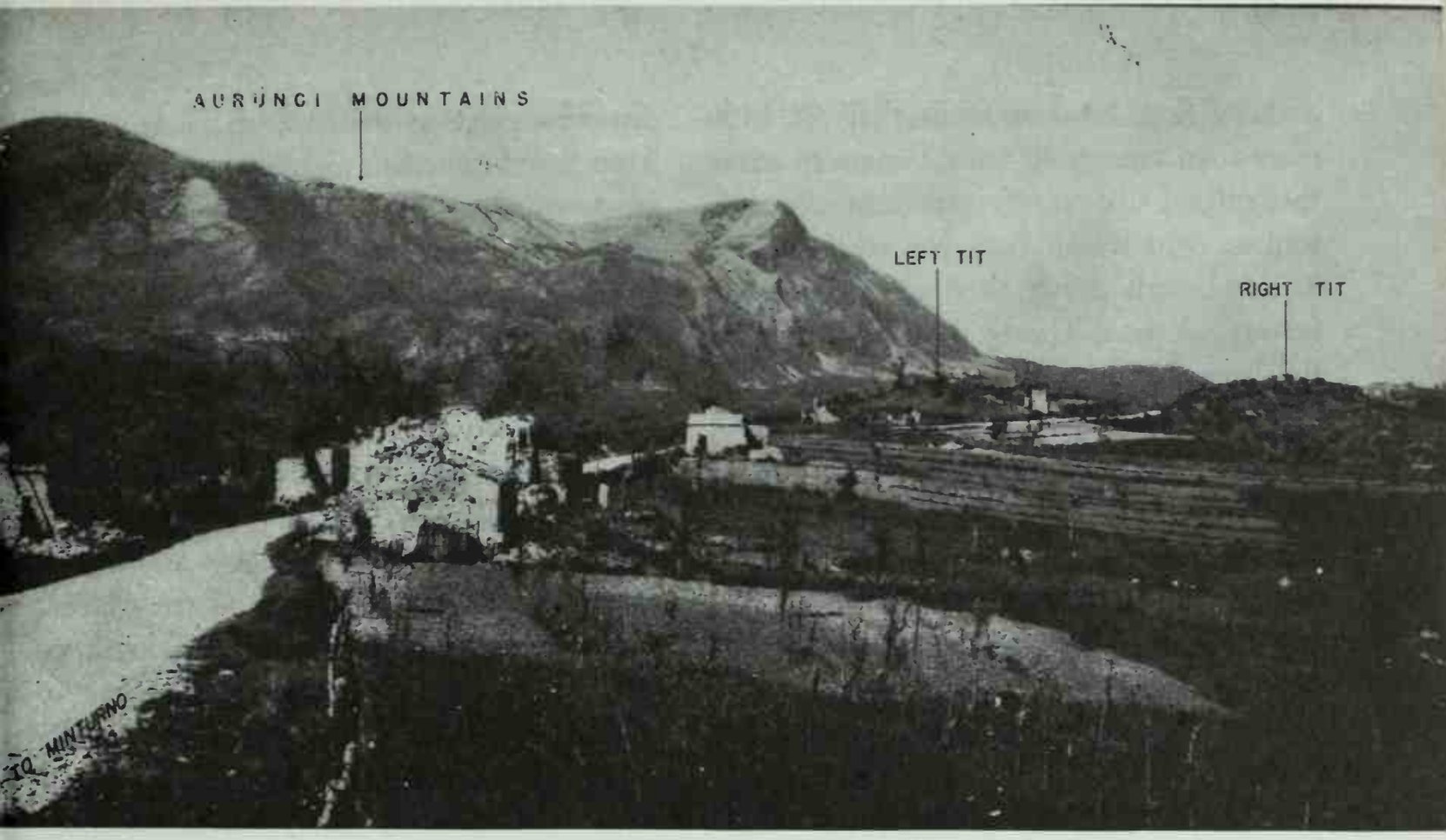


THE OBJECTIVE OF THE 351ST INFANTRY *was Santa Maria Infante, seen on the hill in foreground. The road from Minturno along the ridge comes in from the lower left. Beyond the immediate batleground is the valley leading (upper right) through Ausonia to the Liri Valley. The Aurunci Mountains dominate this plain.*

ridge are cut by draws into small spurs, which, stubbornly held by the enemy, turned out to be the most troublesome obstacles to the 351st's advance. Six hundred and fifty yards beyond the cemetery, small knolls known as the Right and Left Tits, 150 and 146 meters high, jut out on either side of the road. Three hundred yards beyond the Right Tit the steeply sloped side-hill called The Spur extends 750 yards east from the road.


PLAN OF OPENING ATTACK
351st INFANTRY
11 May 1944
AXIS OF MOVEMENTS, 1st PHASE
AXIS OF MOVEMENTS, 2D PHASE
FIRE SUPPORT, 1ST PHASE
ENEMY MLR
500 0 500
YARDS
205
Mt. Bracchi
AUSENTE CREEK
3d Bn
172
Pulcherini
1st Bn
Tome
S. Maria Infonte
153
Mt. Cerreto
104
126
CREEK
103
The Spur
REALI
S-Ridge
131
135
351
Left Tit
Right Tit
CREEK
Solacciano
130
130
3
351
PERLGIA
338
132
199
Casale Hill
2
351
Tufo
Minturno

*MAP NO. 3*




TERRAIN OF THE INITIAL ATTACK, *looking along the Santa Maria road from edge of cemetery. (Photo taken April 1946.)*

From its slightly curved crest (157 and 146 meters at the highest points) The Spur commands both the ridge road and the valley to its east. West of The Spur, Hill 103 dominates the slope on the left side of the road.

East of the main ridge, Reali Creek had cut a small valley along its course east through the hill mass. North–south spurs with sharp slopes jut into this valley on both sides, and made any flanking attack toward Santa Maria more difficult than a direct approach along the road. West of the road, a much more narrow valley formed by the Perlgia Creek separates the Santa Maria ridge from the feature forming the west side of the hill triangle, the S-Ridge running northeast from Solacciano to Tame. Its crest is marked by a series of knobs (131, 109, 126, and 128), with a long saddle separating the first two. Its steep slopes reaching a gradient of 33 percent at places, the S-Ridge was key tactical ground in the coming battle, for it commanded the main advance along the Minturno–Santa Maria road as well as the lower end of the Ausonia–Formia road. Its capture would pave the way for a breakthrough into the Formia corridor and an advance toward the Aurunci Mountains.

The ridges in the hill triangle are extensively cultivated by use of terraces. At the time of the attack, vegetation was sparse and what there was stood less than ankle-high. Some of the hills, notably the forward slope of The Spur, are almost bare. Even where there are scattered trees, by 11 May most of them had been sheared off at half length by

artillery fire. Sunken roads that are little more than farm trails wind their way across the ridges; the most important was the sunken road which branches off from the Santa Maria highway, then winds across the forward slope of The Spur and northeast to Pulcherini.

Less than three miles north of Santa Maria and across the Ausonia Valley, the main Aurunci range rises high above the small hills of the Mt. Bracchi triangle and afforded the enemy observation over the entire area. In the lower reaches of the mountains lie the town of Spigno and Mt. Civita, 900 and 1,800 feet, respectively, above the level of the Ausonia Valley.

The Germans had held the Bracchi hills for months, as part of their Gustav Line defenses from the Apennines to the sea. In the offensive that began on 18 January and netted only minor Allied gains, British 56 Division had captured Minturno and the east–west ridge at the base of the triangle. After this the enemy's main line of resistance ran from Hill 131 to Hill 103, across the road to The Spur, and thence to Pulcherini. South of this line the enemy had scattered machine-gun and sniper positions, sometimes in the houses along the road. On the high ground north and east of Santa Maria (Hills 153, 172 north, 172 south and 170) were other strongpoints.

Despite the efforts of patrols and aerial reconnaissance, the full extent of enemy defenses was not determined. Although in some cases machine-gun emplacements, minefields, and barbed-wire entanglements were accurately located before the action, many elements of the deeply organized defenses would be revealed only in the battle. Cleverly located automatic weapons, which covered extensive minefields and were in turn supported by mortars and light artillery, made up the principal defenses. Our troops

THE RIDGE ROAD, *axis for the 351st Infantry's attack, followed the crest and dipped between small knolls, offering good positions for enemy defenses. Exact location of this view is not known.*

would discover that the machine guns were so placed on forward and reverse slopes of the spurs and flanking ridges that they could bring a grazing cross fire on infantrymen advancing along either side of the road, as well as in the draws between the hills.

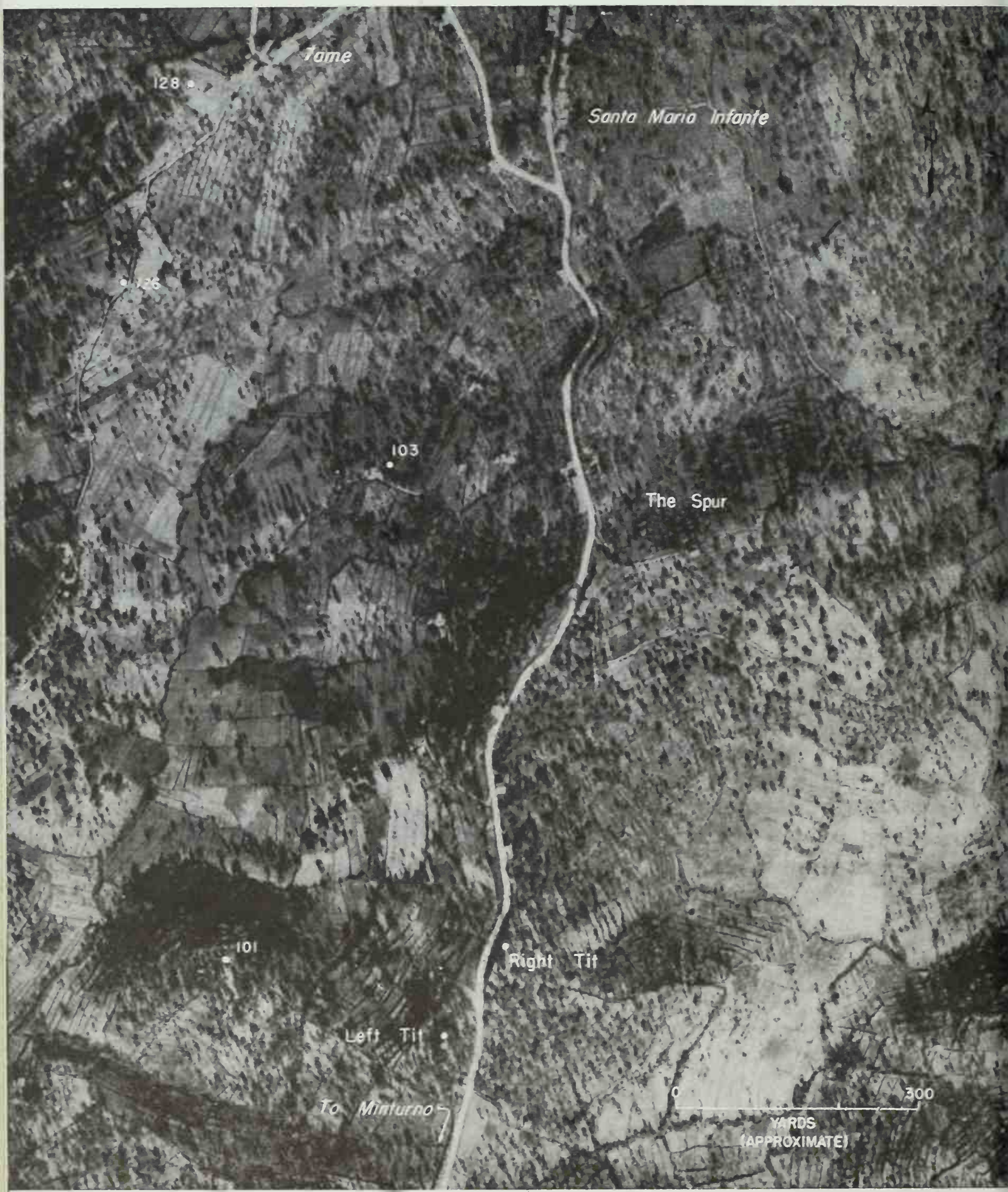
Pillbox shelters supporting the machine guns consisted of two main types. The first was a rectangular excavation, five feet by three feet, with pillars in each corner. Across the pillars were large wooden beams topped with three layers of railroad ties and a layer of stone and earth. The second type of pillbox was built into houses by digging three to four feet into the floor and reinforcing the dugout in a manner similar to the first type, except that only wooden beams and earth were used as reinforcement. Holding about five men, each type of pillbox furnished protection against shell fragments and served as a defensive base against infantry attacks. Most of the German emplacements housing automatic weapons also had some form of overhead cover. At many points communications trenches ran from machine-gun positions to individual dugouts and fox holes where snipers were concealed. In some instances the Germans had alternate machine-gun positions to which they could retreat if forced out of the bunkers that formed the first line of defense. A sufficient supply of ammunition was on hand at the front-line positions, from four to six boxes being available at each machine gun.[1]

The Germans often protected their machine-gun positions with mines and barbed wire. The approaches to the S-Ridge, Tame, Santa Maria and the high ground west of it, and Pulcherini all were covered by fields of antipersonnel mines and in many cases by concertina wire. Yet, on the slopes south of Hill 103 and The Spur, where the enemy had set up a strong belt of machine-gun and sniper positions, mines and barbed wire were used sparingly and were found to present no serious obstacle to the advance of the 351st Infantry. Fields of antitank mines were placed along the Minturno–Santa Maria road between the Tits and The Spur, around Reali Creek in front of Santa Maria and Pulcherini, and along each side of the creek bed that runs east of the S-Ridge.

Defending the sector facing the 351st Infantry was the *94th Fusilier Reconnaissance Battalion (71st Infantry Division)* with an estimated strength of 400–500 men. At the time the Allied drive began, the *94th* consisted of four companies and held a front of approximately 1,200 yards, stretching from just west of Santa Maria to the eastern slope of Pulcherini. Elements of the *267th Grenadier Regiment (94th Infantry Division),* the strength of which probably did not exceed 300–400 men, defended the S-Ridge. Both infantry units had heavy fire support. Several 88-mm cannon and self-propelled guns were situated along the road from Spigno to the Ausonia–Formia highway. Emplaced behind Mt. Civita was a battery of pack howitzers. The major portion of heavier artillery was located west and north of Spigno.

Two regiments were committed in the American attack in the Bracchi hills. The 351st Infantry would attack along a narrow

[1] Much of this information on German positions was acquired during and after the attack. In main features, the defenses were characteristic of other sectors on the Fifth Army front.


Tame
128
Santa Maria Infante
126
103
The Spur
101
Right Tit
Left Tit
To Minturno
0
300
YARDS
(APPROXIMATE)

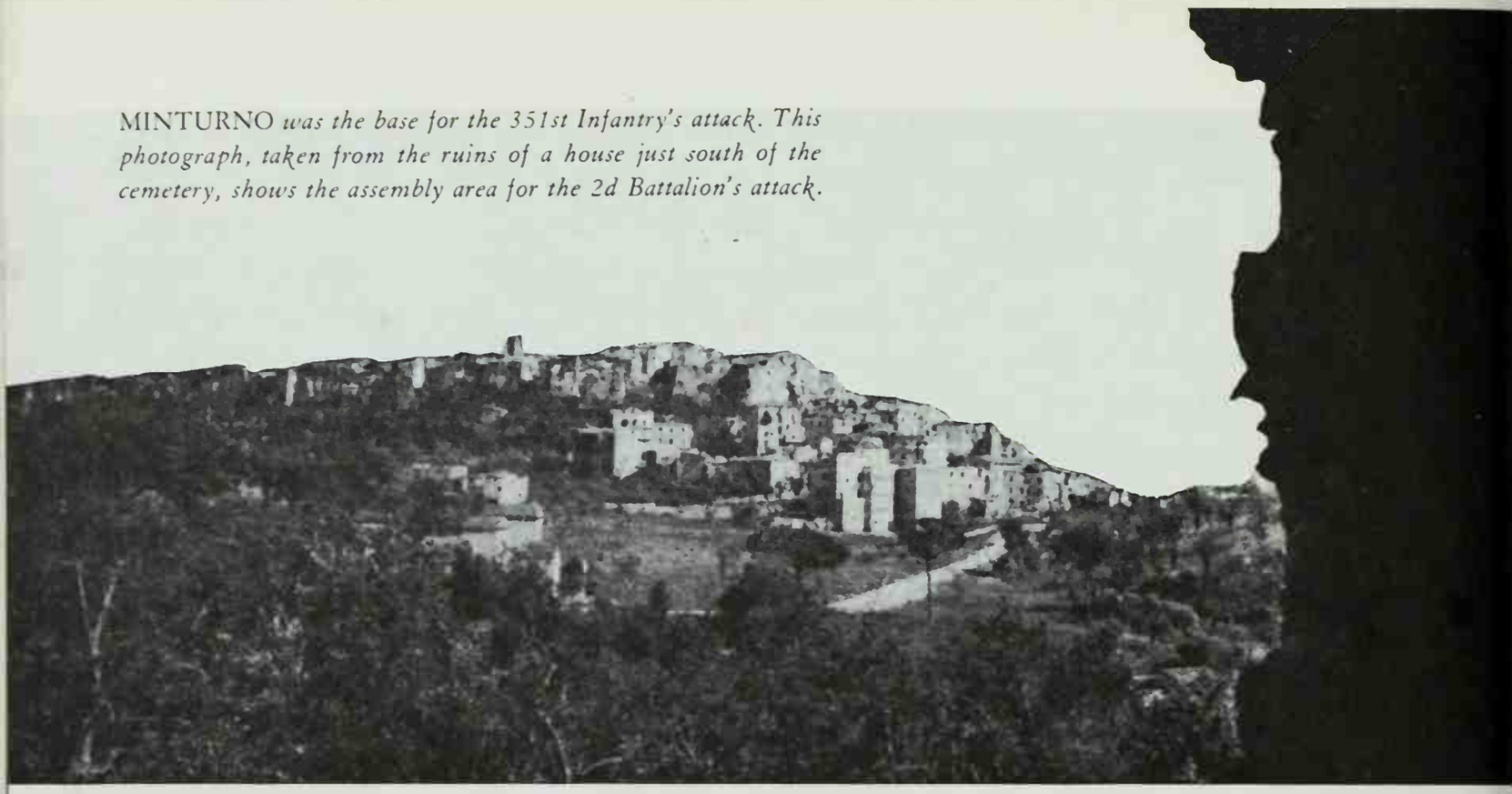
front, 100–200 yards wide, astride the Minturno–Santa Maria road. On the 351st's right flank, the 88th Division's reserve regiment, the 349th Infantry, would support the attack by fire of its heavy weapons. On the left of the 351st, the S-Ridge was the objective of the 338th Infantry, 85th Division. The two regiments attacking in the Bracchi triangle were to maintain contact by use of a patrol of one officer and two squads of riflemen; an SCR 300 radio would be used for communication, as well as a lateral telephone line between adjacent battalions of the two regiments.

The 351st Infantry's plan of attack (Map No. 3, page 122) provided that the 2d Battalion, making the main effort, would seize and hold the high ground to the north and east of Santa Maria, then reorganize to beat off counterattacks. The 3d Battalion would support the attack of the 2d Battalion by machine-gun and mortar fire from positions on Hills 130 and 132, about 800 yards east of the road. After the capture of Santa Maria it would pass through the 2d Battalion and seize the portion of Mt. Bracchi within the regimental zone of action. From Hill 135, on the ridge east of the 3d Battalion's supporting position, the 1st Battalion was to give supporting fire and to maintain contact with the 349th Infantry on the next ridge to its right. When the 3d Battalion was ready to move down the Minturno–Santa Maria road, the 1st Battalion would follow and seize Pulcherini.

The 2d Battalion's attack would be aided by tanks and by normal artillery support. After the mine platoon of the Antitank Company had removed mines, the 1st Platoon, Company C, 760th Tank Battalion would fire and maneuver along the Minturno–Santa Maria road. From positions in the Tufo area, the 2d Chemical Weapons Battalion and Company C, 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion would render fire support; 913th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm howitzer), the Cannon Company, 351st Infantry from the area south of the Minturno–Tufo road, and the 339th Field Artillery Battalion (155-mm howitzer) near the coast, would also be ready to fire.

The plan for the 2d Battalion, carrying the main assault, provided that two companies would jump off from the forward slope of Cemetery Ridge. Company F on the left of the Minturno–Santa Maria road and Company E on the right would advance in a formation of two platoons abreast with the third in reserve following closely. Each leading platoon would lay a white tape line as it moved forward. Company E's initial objectives were Hill 130 and the Right Tit; Company F's, the Left Tit. Once these were secured Company E would move ahead to capture The Spur and occupy the high ground east of Santa Maria, while Company F took Tame, and then went after the high ground north of Santa Maria. Following one objective behind Company E, Company G would go to the Y-junction south of Santa Maria and advance along the road through the town, closing the gap between Companies E and F and mopping up pockets of enemy resistance left by the assault companies. In

TERRAIN OF OPENING ATTACK



MINTURNO *was the base for the 351st Infantry's attack. This photograph, taken from the ruins of a house just south of the cemetery, shows the assembly area for the 2d Battalion's attack.*

the opinion of Lt. Col. Raymond E. Kendall, 2d Battalion commander, and Capt. Carl W. Nelson, Company F commander, only visual contact and radio communication would be required to keep E and F in touch with each other. The time schedule called for the troops to reach Santa Maria less than two hours after the jump-off.

### *The Night Attack: Jump-Off*

To achieve tactical surprise the attack was scheduled to begin in darkness, with no artillery preparation before H Hour, set for 2300. As it turned out, the advantages gained by surprise were balanced by the difficulties of attacking almost blind over hilly terrain. Confusion became the dominant feature of the battle for any group larger than a squad. Platoons were separated and companies had very little idea what was happening in their own zone, let alone on their flanks. The night action, therefore, has to be considered from the level of small groups and told in separate stories, out of which the larger picture can be reconstructed. During most of the night, all anyone knew was what was happening a few feet away.

Company F moved off from Cemetery Ridge before 2300 in order to pass through the cemetery, a favorite target of German artillery, before the enemy could detect our intentions (Map No. 4). At 2240 Company F crossed the Minturno–Santa Maria road, poked through a hole in the south wall of the cemetery, and marched silently across the cemetery with only one or two casualties, from mines. The 3d Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Jack L. Panich, led off on the right, moving forward 25 yards from the road. Abreast of it at 25 yards' interval the 2d Platoon, under Tech/Sgt. Robert A. Casey, was farther down the ridge slope, followed by the 1st Platoon in support, keeping visual contact.

Each platoon was echeloned in a column of squads, about two arms' lengths apart. On the right the company commander, Captain Nelson, with his command group and the 4th Platoon (Weapons Platoon), moved behind the 3d Platoon by the road; the 4th Platoon was ordered to proceed by bounds approximately one terrain feature behind the 3d Platoon. Following to the rear of each of the platoon columns, a section of heavy .30 cal. machine guns from Company H was directed to leapfrog forward from successive terrain features, one section at a time.

Progress was relatively fast, and the platoons aroused no enemy resistance. Leading elements of the 2d Platoon became entangled in some concertina wire, but were freed by Lieutenant Panich, only a few yards away, who took a wirecutter from one of his men and severed the strands. Just before both platoons reached the base of the Left Tit, the deafening sound of the supporting barrage of mortars, machine guns, and artillery opened up all along the Allied front. The men stopped, according to plan. On the other side of the road Company E moved up abreast of Company F through the no man's land that lay between Cemetery Ridge and the Tits, while Company G, in reserve in a forward assembly area below the crest of Hill 156, waited for the signal to join the battle. Over the heads of the infantry, streams of 40-mm tracers marked out routes of advance.

From this point on, the account of the night's battle must follow the separate actions of small groups of the 2d Battalion. No times are definite enough to permit any attempt at giving a situation report for the battalion or for companies at any periods before daylight. In many cases, squads or platoons fight over the same terrain, without making friendly contact—an indication that these actions must have taken place at different times during the hours of darkness.

Company F will be the first unit traced through the attack, beginning with the 3d Platoon. But the story of that platoon quickly becomes the several stories of its squads.

According to schedule, the Left Tit was taken under fire by machine guns, mortars, and artillery. Holding up for 20 minutes for our barrage to lift, Lieutenant Panich decided to deploy the 3d Platoon from a column of squads to a formation of two squads up and abreast, and two in the rear in a skirmish line (Map No. 5).[1] In the first wave were the 1st Squad on the left, commanded by Cpl. Robert F. Tyler, and on the right the 2d Squad under S/Sgt. Charles Spero. Echeloned to the right rear were the 3d Squad under Sgt. Peter Pyenta and the 4th Squad, led by S/Sgt. Edmond B. Hoppes. But the 4th Squad had already become detached in the dense smoke and heavy fire, and was out of contact. (See later, page 138.)

After our barrage was lifted from the Left Tit, the 3d Platoon, less the 4th Squad, pushed up the southern slope. Nearing the crest, the 1st and 3d Squads veered to the right, struck the road, and moved along it for a few yards until the platoon leader, Lieutenant Panich, intercepted them. He warned the 1st and 3d Squad leaders of mines on the

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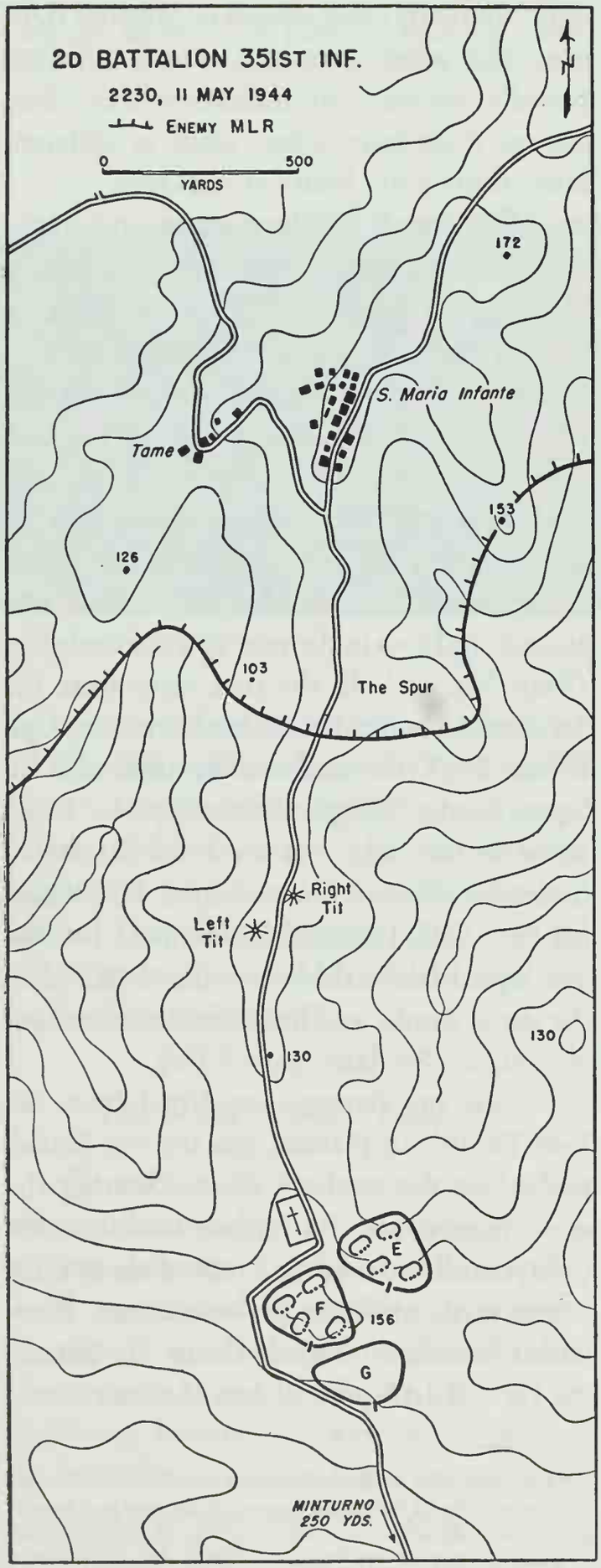
[1] To show more clearly the formation it adopted at this period of the assault, the 3d Platoon is presented on this map in a generalized manner. Actually, it occupied a much smaller area than this map suggests, and it began the assault from positions just west of the road between Point 130 and the Left Tit. All routes of advance in this and later sketches for the night action are approximations.



*MAP NO. 4 and aerial photograph taken 11 November 1943*

road and steered them back to the slope west of it; then Panich went back to the Left Tit where the 2d Squad, under Sergeant Spero, had waited. Led by Sergeant Pyenta, the 1st and 3d Squads were off alone on one of the adventures of the night attack.

### *Sergeant Pyenta's Group at Hill 103*

Moving west from the road, the 1st and 3d Squads, 3d Platoon moved down the ridge slope beyond the Left Tit and swung west of house No. 2. Here they turned east again and moved up along the terraces below Hill 103 at a fast trot.[1] A mine exploded, killing one man and wounding two more in the 3d Squad, but the squads stopped only briefly for the determination of casualties, then continued to push up the rising ground near Hill 103 to a point south of house No. 6 and west of the big house No. 7 on the road. There two explosions, caused either by demolition charges or by artillery shells hitting in the dirt and driving it skyward, rocked the earth near the two squads and knocked them to the ground. Picking themselves up, the men started for the road, or for where they guessed it to be. Climbing up over the next terrace, they followed it for about 15 yards until they hit a double strand of concertina wire. It was then about 0100 and the moon had come out, although smoke and fog obscured it.

Corporal Tyler, still in the lead of the 1st and 3d Squads, came back to Sergeant Pyenta to report that he could not get through the wire because no wirecutters were at hand. The 3d Squad's assistant leader, who carried a wirecutter, had become detached from the squad. Unable to move ahead, Sergeant Pyenta and Corporal Tyler decided to bypass the wire, go up toward the road, and follow it until they contacted other elements of Company F, who were thought to be somewhere ahead toward Tame. Turning away from the wire, Corporal Tyler and the survivors of his squad started off, racing over the terrace as fast as they could make it. As he passed from view above the first terrace, Corporal Tyler called back to Sergeant Pyenta, "The road's up here!" The words were scarcely out of his mouth before bursts of machine-gun fire silenced him and mowed down the rest of his squad. The fire came from two automatic weapons, one in house No. 7 on the road, the other in a dugout behind the barbed wire and on the left flank of the 1st Squad. It was the latter gun, firing at point-blank range, which did most of the damage. Along with the two machine guns, a machine pistol fired into the 1st Squad from a few yards to the left of the dugout.

One rifleman in the 3d Squad unloaded eight shots in the direction from which the machine pistol had fired. The rest of the 3d Squad opened up on the two German machine guns with everything they had, shooting rifle grenades and throwing hand grenades at the two positions. When the shower of explosives was over, the machine guns were silent; the enemy had either been knocked out or had retreated to other positions. But during the fight the 1st and 3d Squads were reduced to nine men, including the 3d Squad leader, Sergeant Pyenta.

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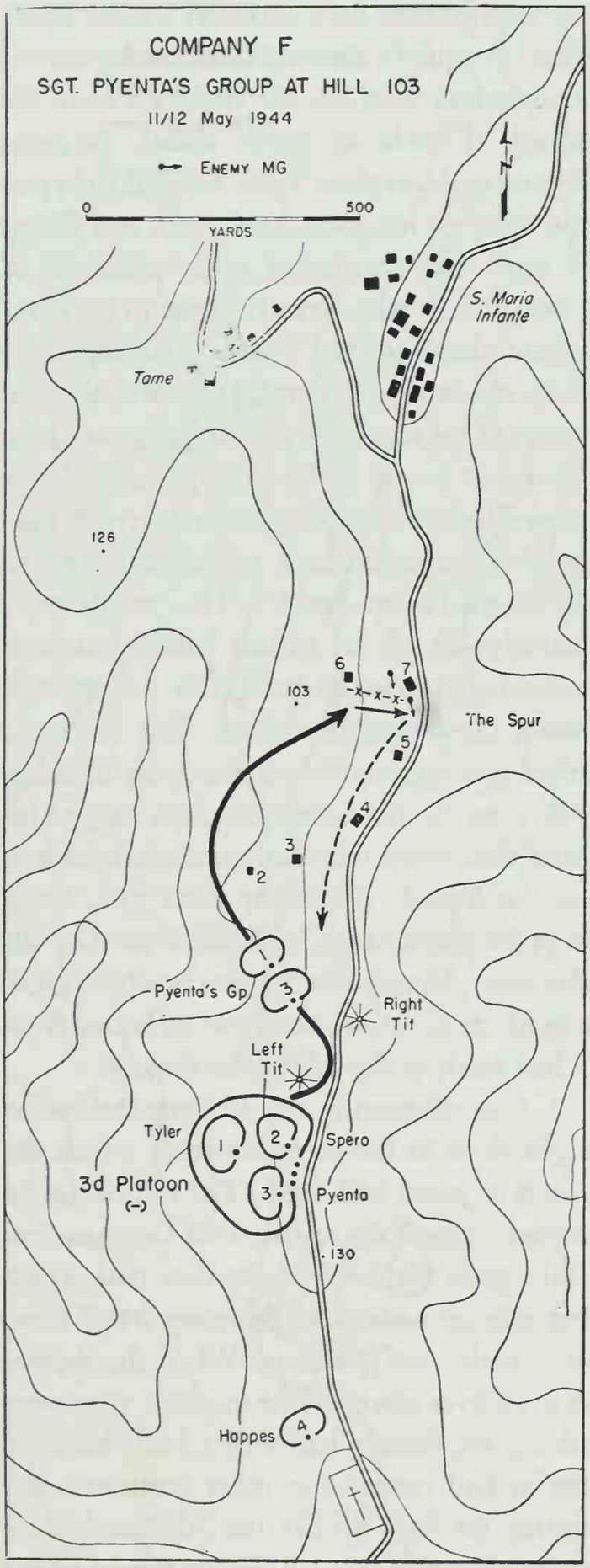
[1] Hill 103 is only a small knoll at the end of a very minor spur west of the road, a rise in no way comparable to The Spur just on the other side of the ridge.




*MAP NO. 5*

As he had no idea where to find other troops of Company F, believed to be ahead, Sergeant Pyenta decided to withdraw with the few remaining men to try to contact other elements of the company in the rear. Walking along the slope near the road, but dropping to the ground whenever artillery shells came close, Sergeant Pyenta and his eight men moved back toward the rear.[1] When they reached the slope of a little knoll situated between Hill 103 and the Left Tit, they saw a man outlined against the crest. Thinking that he was from Company F, Sergeant Pyenta called out, "Hey, is that the 3d Platoon up there?" The man dropped from view, and a grenade, which exploded harmlessly above the 3d Squad, answered the question. The 3d Squad did not return the fire. Picking up a tape line left by some other unit in advance, the men followed the marker until they reached a shell hole 150 yards north of the cemetery. Here they found Lieutenant Panich and a handful of men who had pulled back, after troubles of their own, on a similar search for other elements of Company F. Lieutenant Panich's story is next.

### *Lieutenant Panich's Group at Hill 103*

In the advance of the 1st and 3d Squads of the 3d Platoon beyond the Left Tit, the 2d Squad had fallen behind and lost contact with them as well as with the 4th Squad.

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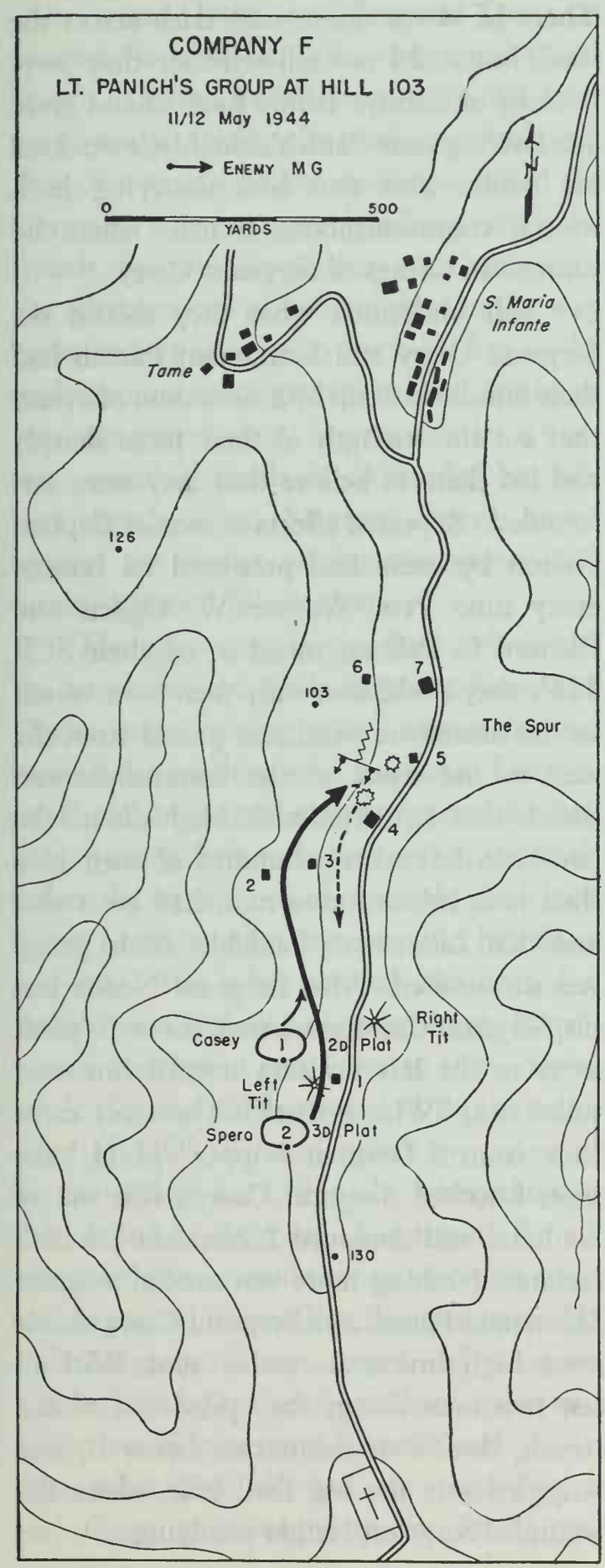
[1] In doing so, they apparently skirted the enemy positions just west of house No. 5, where Panich's group fought their action (see next section), but without seeing the enemy or drawing fire. That this could happen in night fighting is possible, but it is also conceivable that the men interviewed were mistaken as to their exact locations near Hill 103, and that the Pyenta and Panich groups may have fought the same enemy positions, at different times. The matter could not be settled by interview on the ground.




*MAP NO. 6*

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Lieutenant Panich was with the 2d Squad; informed that neither the rest of his platoon nor the other platoons of Company F were behind him, Panich set out to catch up with the advance and soon ran into Sergeant Casey, the acting leader of the 2d Platoon (Map No. 6). This platoon had led off the left column of Company F's advance. Sergeant Casey was in a situation like that of Lieutenant Panich. He had lost contact with most of his platoon and had decided to look for the 3d Platoon. Meeting on the slope beyond the Left Tit, Panich and Casey consolidated the remnants of two squads which they had with them: six men with Sergeant Casey from the 1st Squad of the 2d Platoon and five men, including Lieutenant Panich, from the 3d Platoon.

Ignorant of Captain Nelson's whereabouts, Lieutenant Panich decided to push on until he caught up with the other squads of the 3d Platoon, which he judged were all ahead of him. The makeshift force walked fast up the forward slopes of Hill 103 under cover of an ascending row of terraces, which protected them from the machine guns on the crest of the hill. In the lead of the group was Sergeant Spero, who took off from the Left Tit and across to Hill 103 like a wild Indian, yelling and running with his tommy gun at his hip. With mortar shells falling all around them, Panich's group arrived at the highest terrace on the slope, which was the last line of protective cover against machine-gun fire. Here they dropped in a big shell hole to explore the situation and decide what to do. Thirty-five yards beyond the terrace, over which concertina wire was strung, there were two dugouts on the crest

from which machine guns were firing. Above them and near the road was a house, No. 5. Since the top of the terrace was in the direct line of enemy machine-gun fire, rifles were useless and hand grenades had to be thrown at the dugouts.

When this tactic produced no visible results, Lieutenant Panich left a few men in the big shell hole and led the rest, with Sergeant Spero in the van, over the terrace toward the machine-gun emplacements. They burst into the barbed wire and pulled themselves through without injury except to their pants. Under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire, they crawled forward until they reached an open communications trench into which they dropped for protection. They were a little beyond the enemy machine guns. The trench connected the two machine-gun dugouts with sleeping quarters and other enemy positions on the reverse slope of Hill 103; it was from 30–50 yards long and 5–6 feet deep, but was barely wide enough for one man to wriggle through. Between the south end of the communications trench and the two machine-gun dugouts ran small covered passageways. Protected from machine-gun fire as long as they kept their heads below the surface, Lieutenant Panich's men threw hand grenades at the German positions until they exhausted their supply.

At this point Lieutenant Panich and Sergeant Casey decided that they could not remain much longer in the trench, chiefly because of our own mortar fire which had begun to plaster the whole crest of the hill. Climbing out of the trench, Lieutenant Panich crawled to a shell hole only a few yards away from the house near the road. There he saw a dozen men dash across the road, but could not tell whether they were friendly or enemy. Before long a hand grenade landing near Panich's shell hole resolved his doubts and sent him scurrying back to the communications trench, where he jumped in on top of Sergeant Casey.

Still undecided what they should do, Sergeant Casey and Lieutenant Panich had their minds made up by a succession of events that cut the strength of their force sharply and led them to believe that they were surrounded. Repeated efforts to contact Captain Nelson by radio had produced no results: every time Pvts. Warner W. Ogden and Richard C. Pelham tuned in on their SCR 536's they could hear only their own voices. In the meantime word was passed from the rear to the front of the communications trench that Sgt. Frederick H. Neddo, who had been left with a handful of men in a shell hole below the terrace, had been shot and that Lieutenant Panich's whole group was surrounded. After Sergeant Neddo was hit, Sergeant Casey saw a man about 10 yards away to the left walking toward him and called out, "Who is that?" The reply came back from a German "zipper" pistol;[1] the shots knocked Sergeant Casey's rifle out of his hand and damaged Lieutenant Panich's carbine. Nothing more was needed to make Lieutenant Panich and Sergeant Casey decide it was high time to vacate their spot. With all but two men along, they piled out of the trench, dove over the terrace below it, and wriggled into the big shell hole where the wounded Sergeant Neddo was lying.

[1] One of the common soldier terms for the machine pistol. Another was "burp" gun.

Private Ogden and Sergeant Spero remained behind in the communications trench. Ogden traded shots with the German who was using the machine pistol and, though wounded in the exchange, killed the German, who toppled headlong into the trench. Sergeant Spero then crawled toward the southern end of the trench. On the way back, as Sergeant Spero stuck his leg in the underground passageway to the left-hand machine-gun dugout, he was shot by a German crouched inside it. Wounded but still very much alive, Sergeant Spero edged around the corner of the passageway and tommy-gunned his assailant.

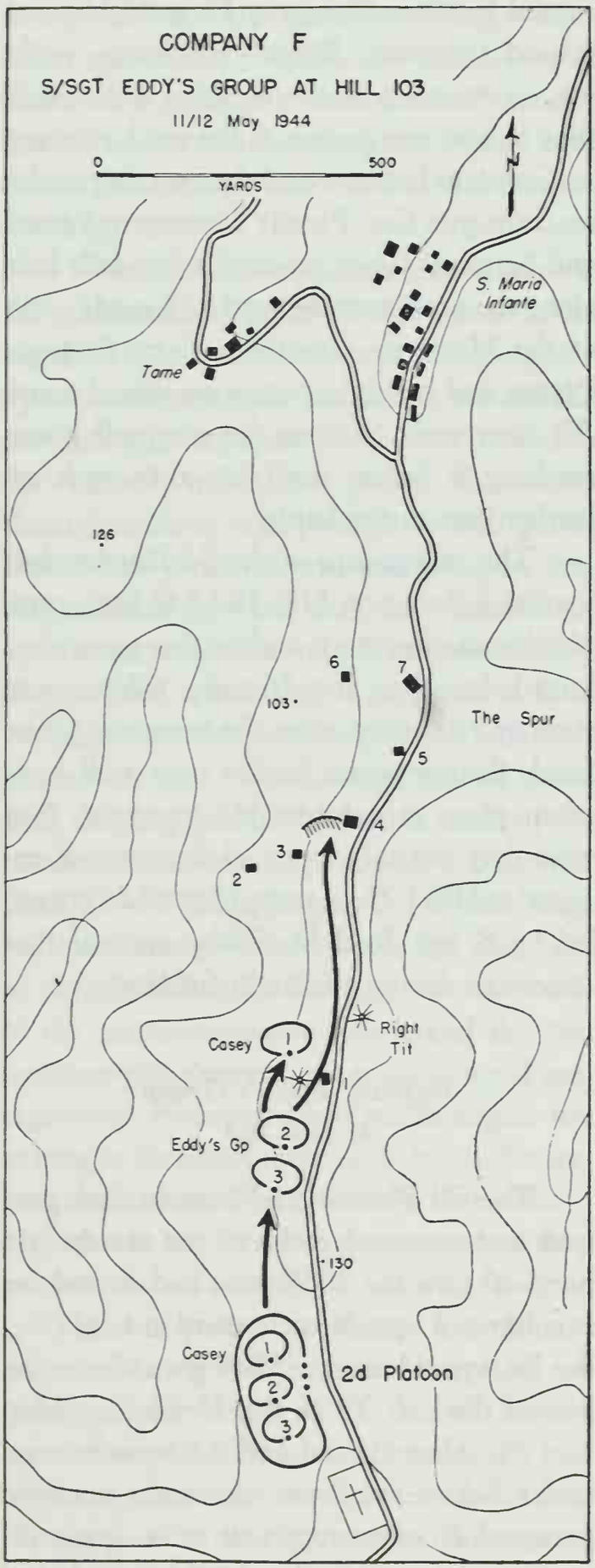
The other men in the shell hole below the terrace waited while Sergeant Spero and Ogden were fighting with Germans in and around the machine-gun positions. Lieutenant Panich organized security around the shell hole, putting four men in front on the bank before the terrace, one on the right flank, and himself and another man on the left flank and rear. For what seemed like ages, but really was a little less than an hour, Panich waited for Ogden and Spero to come down, while German shells poured in on the south slope of Hill 103 and killed two more of his dwindling force. Finally, when the two men failed to show up, Lieutenant Panich sent his three remaining men to report what had happened to battalion headquarters. He and Sergeant Casey stayed 15 minutes longer, hoping against hope that Ogden and Spero would join them. At the end of this time, when they still had not come, Panich and Casey gave them up for dead[1] and started back for Company F's assembly area behind Cemetery Ridge. Crawling, walking, or running as the occasion demanded, they moved along close to the road, meeting no Germans but now and then coming under machine-gun fire. Finally Lieutenant Panich and Sergeant Casey reached a big shell hole along the slope near the road 150 yards north of the Minturno cemetery, where Sergeant Pyenta and his eight men soon joined them. All then went back to the jump-off point, reaching it before daylight; they took no further part in the battle.

The two groups of the 3d Platoon during the fighting on Hill 103 had been completely out of contact, and neither group had knowledge that any friendly troops were close by. Actually, since the times cannot be fixed, their separate battles may well have taken place at considerable intervals. Nor were they the only forces of Company F engaged at Hill 103; a group of the 2d Platoon, led by S/Sgt. Paul M. Eddy, reached that same area during the night fighting.

### *Sergeant Eddy's Group at Hill 103*

The 2d Platoon had become disorganized and scattered early in the attack. At jump-off time the 2d Platoon had started out in column of squads, each squad in single file, the 1st Squad leading. They got as far as the base of the Left Tit in this formation (Map No. 7). Here the 2d and 3d Squads came under heavy fire from our own machine guns, which were supposed to be firing on the Tit and over the heads of our men but were dropping some rounds short. A bullet

[1] Ogden and Spero later returned unassisted to the 2d Battalion aid station.




*MAP NO. 7*

smashed through the mouth of the 2d Squad leader, disabling him; other casualties were suffered in the 3d Squad. The assistant leader of the 2d Squad then took command, but the five or six men whom he had left refused to follow. It was during this confusion that the 2d and 3d Squads lost contact with the 1st, elements of which, under Sergeant Casey, were to join up with Lieutenant Panich.

After the 2d Squad's assistant leader had tried vainly to move his men out, Sergeant Eddy consolidated what was left of the two squads and led them around to the east of the Left Tit, crawling under our machine-gun fire and meeting some German artillery fire. As shells and bullets started hitting all around, the men in the rear stopped. Only a few men kept up with Sergeant Eddy, who thought that his whole force was close behind him. After crawling a few yards, they saw several figures moving around a nearby house, No. 1. Sergeant Eddy called to them, asking if they were from the 2d Platoon. When hand grenades answered the query, Sergeant Eddy sent a messenger back to the rest of the 2d and 3d Squads, ordering them to come up. Eight or nine men responded, but by that time the enemy opposition had disappeared.

Following terraces, the remnants of the 2d and 3d Squads then moved out again close to the road. They got as far as the start of the gentle rise in ground toward Hill 103; then artillery shells hit squarely in their midst, killing a BAR man and wounding several others. When the fire was over, only five men, including Sergeant Eddy, were left. In addition to the enemy artillery, machine

guns on the crest of Hill 103 as well as snipers along the road placed fire on the small group. After firing antitank grenades at the machine guns, Sergeant Eddy and his men decided to wait for reinforcements from the 1st Platoon, which was supposed to be following the 2d Platoon.

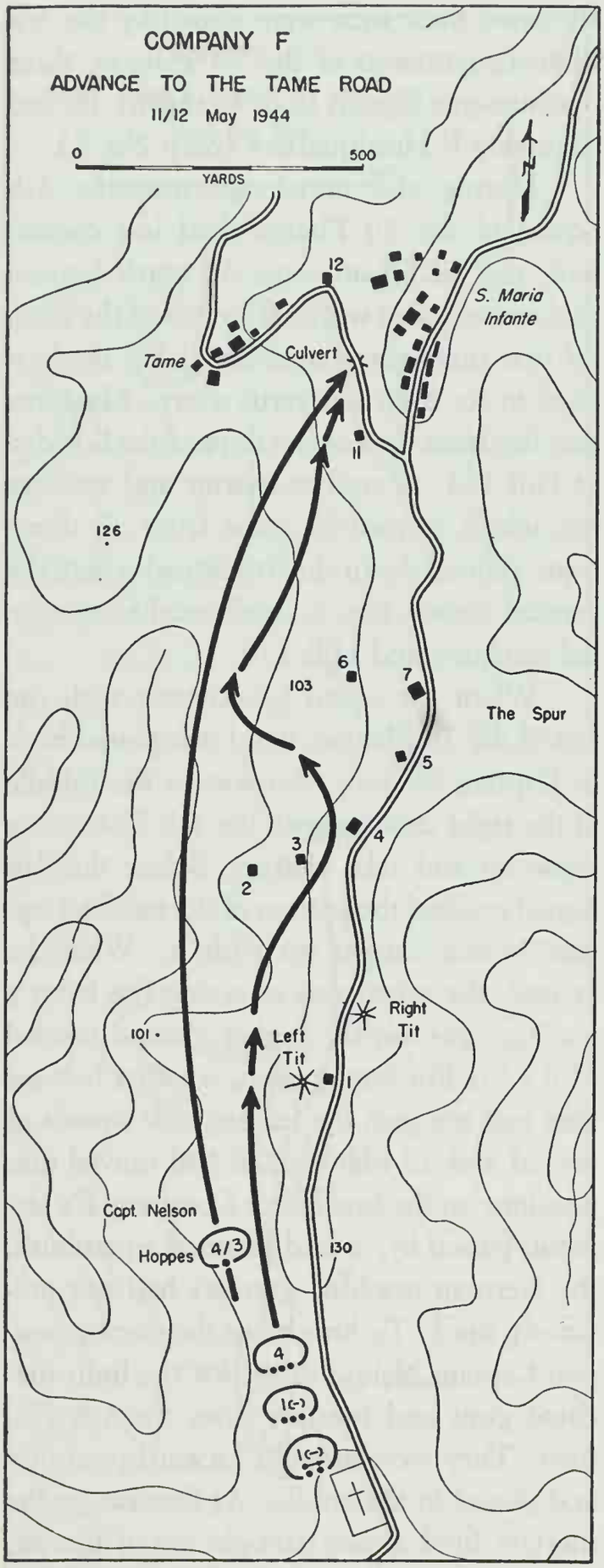
A few minutes later some men came down the road from the direction of Minturno: the much needed reinforcements, so Sergeant Eddy thought. He called out to them, but was answered by rifles and machine guns. Sergeant Eddy's force tossed hand grenades, then shot an antitank grenade that landed in the enemy group, dispersing the Germans and putting an end to the fire fight. The handful of men from the 2d and 3d Squads, 2d Platoon dug in where they were, west of the road facing the slopes toward Hill 103. By the time they had finished dawn was breaking. All day long on 12 May, under heavy fire, they waited there vainly for the 3d Battalion to reach them. Just before midnight, 12 hours after the jump-off, they returned to Cemetery Ridge.

### *Advance to the Tame Road*

Other elements of Company F had kept together more successfully than the assault squads of the 2d and 3d Platoons. By separate routes of advance, two main groups succeeded in reaching a culvert on the Santa Maria–Tame road, only a few yards from the company objective, house No. 12 at the inverted V-bend. The first group to reach this most advanced position, 2,500 yards from the line of departure, was the 4th Squad, 3d Platoon led by Captain Nelson. By dawn these men were joined by the 4th Platoon, remnants of the 1st Platoon, three machine-gun squads from Company H, and Company F Headquarters (Map No. 8).

During the initial advance, the 4th Squad of the 3d Platoon had lost contact with the 3d Squad some 50 yards beyond the cemetery and within 25 yards of the road. At that time heavy smoke and fog made it hard to see even ten yards away. Machine-gun fire from the eastern slope of the S-Ridge at Hill 131, as well as mortar and artillery fire which seemed to come from all directions, pinned down the 4th Squad where the ground sloped into a small saddle between the cemetery and Hill 130.

When the squad lost contact with the rest of the 3d Platoon, word was passed back to Captain Nelson, who was in the middle of the right column with the 4th Platoon, to come up and take charge. Before the 4th Squad reached the bottom of the saddle, Captain Nelson caught up with it. When he arrived, the squad was receiving fire from a machine gun on the higher ground toward Hill 130. For some reason, whether because they had not seen the leading rifle squads of the 2d and 3d Platoons, or had moved into positions on the knoll after Company F's elements passed by, or had planned an ambush, the German machine gunners had not previously fired. To knock out the enemy position Captain Nelson called for the light machine guns and mortars from the 4th Platoon. They were brought forward promptly and placed in the saddle. At that range, the mortars fired almost straight up in the air, but neither they nor the machine guns could drive the enemy from his position. These




*MAP NO. 8*

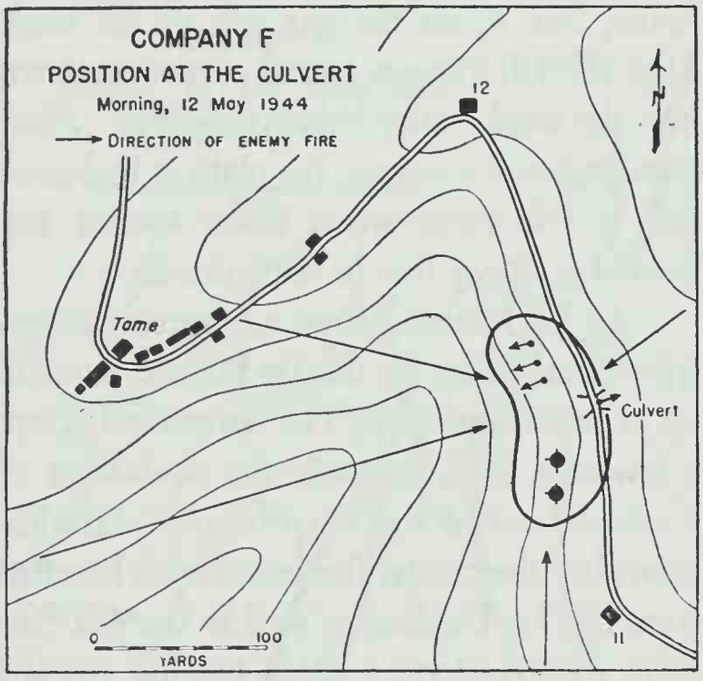
means failing, Captain Nelson grabbed an M–1 rifle from one of his men and fired a grenade point-blank at the machine gun, knocking it out and killing the two gunners.

After the enemy gun was silenced, the 4th Squad, 3d Platoon under Captain Nelson's leadership progressed so rapidly over the ridge slopes west of the Minturno–Santa Maria road that it lost contact with the follow-up units: the 4th Platoon, the 1st Platoon, headquarters command group, and the machine gunners from Company H. During their advance the men of the 4th Squad ran fast in a half-crouch, using the terraces and the shell holes that pockmarked the route of advance for protection against machine-gun fire which was coming over their heads from the northern end of the creek valley toward the S-Ridge. In contrast to the routes used by other elements, the 4th Squad seems to have kept on the lower slopes of the ridge, well away from the road. Moving past the small spur made by the Left Tit and Hill 103, they reached a point 300 yards beyond 103 before encountering enemy; here they captured 2 mortars and 15 Germans in dugouts, half-dressed and completely taken by surprise. After a brief exchange of fire with another small group of the enemy who were using machine pistols from the left front, near the bottom of the creek valley, the 4th Squad pushed on without meeting further resistance until it came to the culvert near the inverted V-bend on the Tame–Santa Maria road. Dawn was just breaking, but the smoke and haze were so dense that visibility was nearly zero. In a short while, stronger elements of Company F joined up at the culvert position.

Just behind the 4th Squad, 3d Platoon at the saddle north of the cemetery, the 4th Platoon (Weapons), led by 1st Lt. Robert C. Kozuch, was soon outdistanced. One machine-gun section from Company H followed this platoon. After being slowed down by barbed wire beyond the cemetery, the group moved across the higher ground beyond the saddle without meeting resistance and went around the western slope of the Left Tit. By that time one squad of the machine-gun section had become separated in the darkness. As soon as the loss was discovered 2d Lt. Eugene Loper, platoon leader of Company H, united the remaining squad with another machine-gun section that had drifted off from the right column of Company F's assault force. Meanwhile the 1st Platoon, which was supposed to advance behind the 2d Platoon but had been unable to keep in contact with it, caught up and fell in behind the 4th Platoon.

Halfway across the Left Tit the 4th Platoon received fire from a machine gun on Hill 101. The machine guns and mortars of the 4th Platoon were set up in a shallow ditch on the reverse slope of the Tit, returned the fire for a short time, and apparently disposed of the enemy gun. When it became silent, the men of the 4th Platoon again moved forward. They had advanced only 15 yards when a machine gun or machine pistol—it was hard to tell which—began firing down their backs from the crest of the Left Tit. Hugging the side of a terrace wall, the 4th Platoon passed out of range and then walked across a shallow draw beyond the Left Tit. The platoon continued to follow terraces along the slope until it approached a house, No. 4, on the left side of the road. Here the 4th Platoon veered northwest down into the creek valley below the ridge. After climbing over a terrace, the platoon had gone only a few yards when heavy mortar fire pinned it down five to ten minutes.

1st Lt. John M. Weston, company executive officer, called for the 1st Platoon to come up as reinforcements. The men trickled up, a few at a time, but only the equivalent of a squad reached the 4th Platoon. Arriving soon after the mortar fire ceased, this handful from the 1st Platoon, as well as the 4th Platoon, moved along a ditch leading toward the creek and then swung around the western slope of Hill 103. When the mortar fire was over the column of men from the 4th and 1st Platoons and Company Headquarters had deployed in a staggered, spread formation. Without meeting further resistance they pushed on north until they reached a point near house No. 11, which was on the Tame–Santa Maria road between the Y-junction and the culvert. Here they were stopped by a voice which called to them in perfect English, "Headquarters this way." After a silence, the German discharged a machine pistol straight up in the air. The men of the 4th and 1st Platoons lined up against a terrace near the house and waited for the German to come closer in order to get him from point-blank range. They heard him coming, but before they could bring him in their sights, he about-faced and went off in the dark. After this incident, the group pushed on to the culvert and joined forces with Captain Nelson's party. The three squads from the machine-gun platoon of Company H had managed to keep up with the advance.




*MAP NO. 9*

Just as this reinforcement reached Captain Nelson at the culvert, American artillery shells as well as German machine-gun and mortar fire from the S-Ridge began to fall on the area. Although our shelling ceased after word went back by radio for the artillery to lift, the German fire made the draw a dangerous place. Only the stoned-in culvert, which ran under the road 150 yards south of the inverted V-bend, offered much protection from this fire. About 20 men jammed into the small passageway until they were packed in like sardines; those who could not use the culvert dug in against terraces close by (Map No. 9). West of the road, machine guns from Company H were emplaced on a flat surface below the road and the highest terrace. One light machine gun was put in a drainage hole through the top and far end of the culvert tunnel. The 60-mm mortars were placed in defiladed positions from 15 to 30 yards to the right of the culvert on the slope below the road. To wipe out resistance in Tame and reduce the pressure against his force, Captain Nelson sent a squad of five men with a light machine gun to a house in the northeastern part of the village. After harassing the enemy for several hours, the squad was captured.

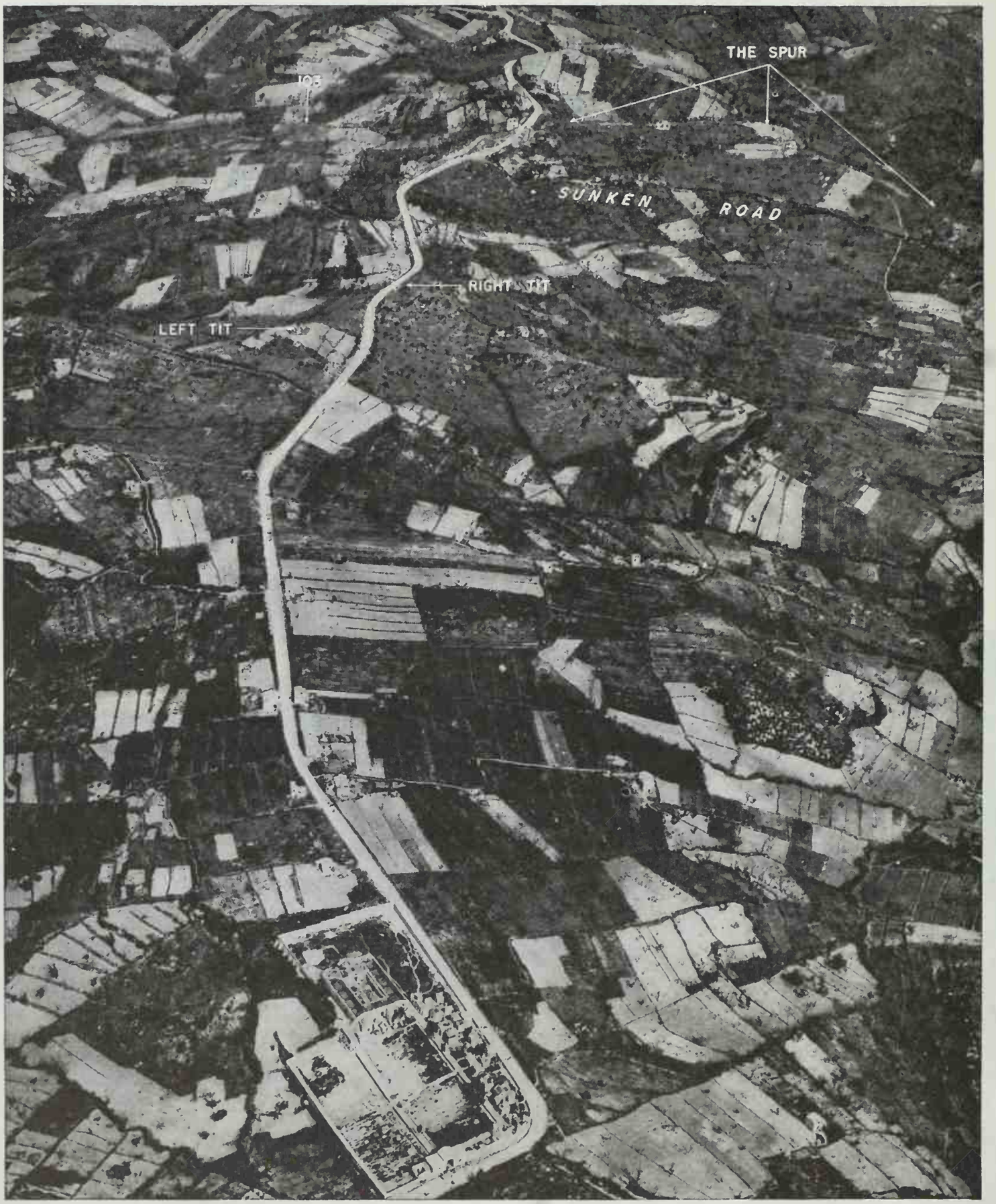
While Captain Nelson's men were digging in at the culvert, the Germans opened up from all directions. They fired from the S-Ridge and Tame on the rear and left flank of the positions at the culvert, and from the high ground north of Santa Maria. If the Germans had ever withdrawn or been driven from Hill 103, they now returned. They used their automatic weapons on Hill 103 and in a house at the head of the creek valley. German mortars in a haystack on the eastern slope of Hill 126 (on the S-Ridge) and in well concealed positions north of Tame lobbed shells into the area held by Company F. About 0800 a group of snipers armed with machine pistols and rifles came down from Hill 126 toward the draw between that hill and the Santa Maria–Tame road. Observing them move up, Company F opened fire, and the Germans had to run for the cover of the creek bed. But they reached it, and throughout the day exchanged fire with Company F. Neither force caused the other many casualties, but the enemy in the valley formed a serious threat to any withdrawal of Company F. In fact, with Hill 103 in enemy hands, Captain Nelson's small force was now practically cut off.

The defending group at the culvert, 400 yards beyond Hill 103, was the only sizable force of Company F which was able to hold ground beyond the line of departure through-

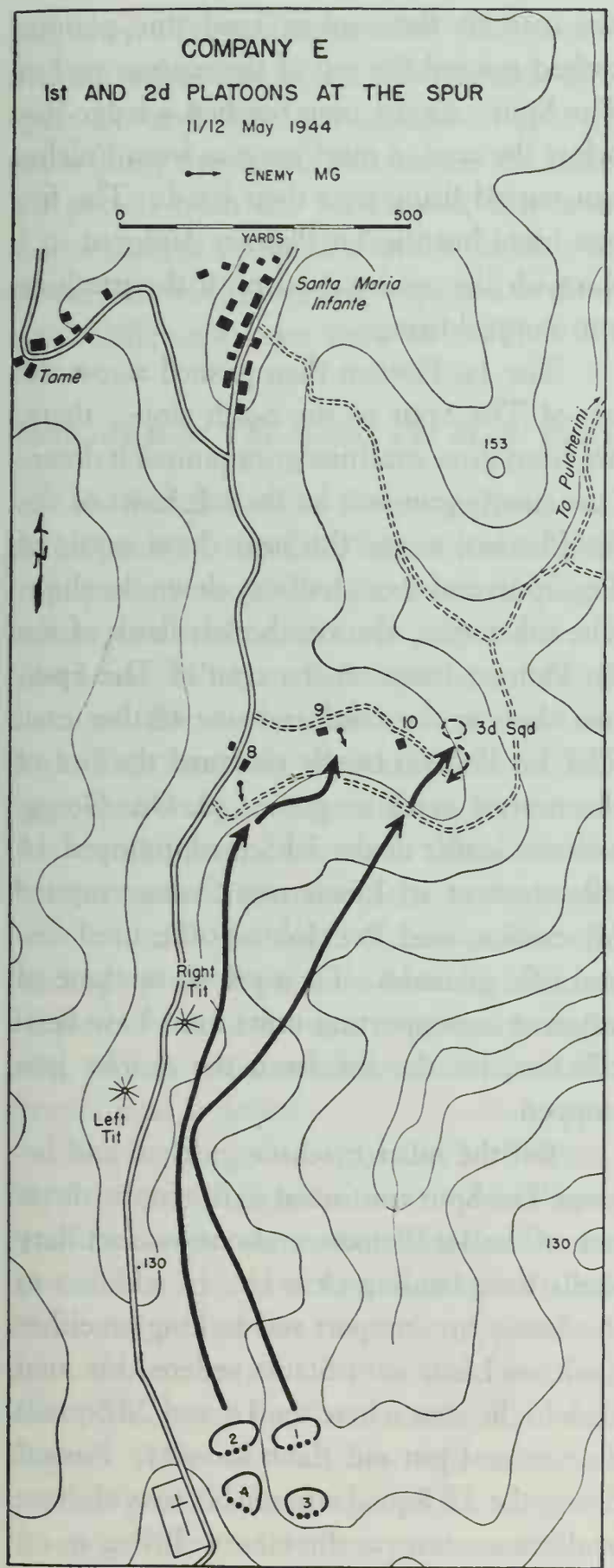
out 12 May. Sergeant Eddy's handful from the 2d Platoon held out near Hill 103 through the day and until midnight, but the rest of the units (Sergeant Pyenta with the remnants of the 3d Platoon, and Lieutenant Panich and Sergeant Casey with survivors from the 2d and 3d Platoons) had been disintegrated by casualties and had pulled back to Cemetery Ridge. Company F's attack had met unexpectedly strong enemy resistance, but had suffered also through the failure of communications and the lack of coordination between units in the darkness. As the SCR 536 radios were out of commission most of the time, or unable to reach adjacent units, Company Headquarters with Captain Nelson could scarcely ever find out what his lead platoons were doing. During the attack the flank patrol of the 338th Infantry was unable to keep in touch with Company F, nor was visual contact ever established between Companies E and F.

As it happened, Company E, over on the right wing, was having as little success as did the Company F's attack west of the Minturno–Santa Maria road.

TAME *was a small cluster of buildings west of Santa Maria. From it, Germans fired at members of Company F that had reached culvert. Photo is from high ground near Santa Maria, looking across the Tame road. Culvert area is either at left edge or just beyond it. The large house at right is on the V-turn of the road leading to Tame.*




MINTURNO–SANTA MARIA INFANTE RIDGE, *looking north from the cemetery. (This aerial oblique taken April 1946.)*



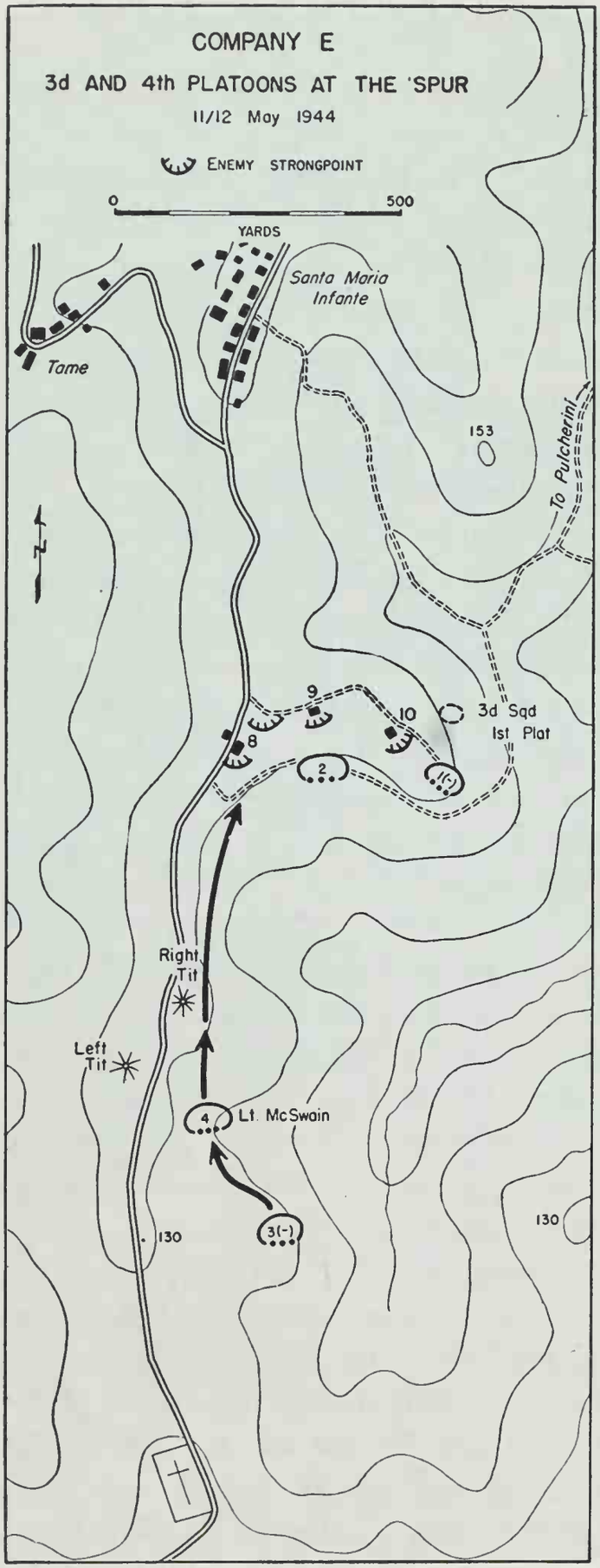

*MAP NO. 10*

### *Company E at The Spur: 1st Platoon*

Jumping off at 2300, Company E had swiftly advanced along the east side of the road. In a box formation of two columns, the 1st Platoon on the right and the 2d Platoon on the left led the advance. The 3d Platoon followed the 1st, and the 4th Platoon followed the 2d at a distance of 100 yards. The left-hand column was 75 yards from the road and the right column 75 yards farther east along the slope (Map No. 10).

Leading the right column, the 1st and 2d Squads of the 1st Platoon, abreast, moved so fast that they soon lost contact with the 3d Squad following in reserve. Before reaching the Right Tit the 1st Platoon mistakenly veered from its predetermined route of advance and swung hard toward the road behind the 2d Platoon. After walking in that direction for some distance, 2d Lt. William K. Stauss, the platoon leader, realized his error and cut back sharply to the right away from the road. While they were making this unintentional detour the 2d Platoon had outdistanced the 1st Platoon, which was ordered by Capt. Robert K. Carlstone, the company commander, to close the gap and come up abreast.

North of the Right Tit machine-gun fire held up the 1st and 2d Squads, still leading the 1st Platoon, for about ten minutes. As they crossed the shallow draw north of the Tit and pushed up the southern slope of The Spur, machine guns on its crest were firing over their heads. To reorganize and get their bearing the squads stopped briefly at the sunken road which runs across the forward slope. After the 3d Squad caught up with




*MAP NO. 11*

the men at the sunken road, the platoon rushed toward the top of the eastern end of The Spur. As the men reached a ledge just below the crest, a machine gun from Pulcherini started firing over their heads. The fire was high, but the 1st Platoon deployed in a skirmish line and waited until the machine gun stopped firing.

The 1st Platoon then pushed across the top of The Spur to the north slope; there, fire from three machine guns pinned it down. One enemy gun was on the left front of the 1st Platoon, across the next draw north of The Spur, and about halfway down the slope. The other two, also on the left flank of the 1st Platoon, were on the crest of The Spur, one close to the road and one farther east. The 1st Platoon briefly returned the fire of the nearest machine gun. Cpl. Ora Gregg, assistant leader of the 2d Squad, pumped 16 rifle shots at it, Lieutenant Stauss emptied his carbine, and Pvt. John Rocke fired several rifle grenades. Their efforts or those of adjacent or supporting units must have been effective, for the fire from the nearest gun stopped.

But the other machine guns on and beyond The Spur continued to fire in the direction of the 1st Platoon, and our own artillery shells were landing close by. In addition to this heavy fire, support was lacking on either flank, so Lieutenant Stauss ordered his men back to the crest where the 1st and 2d Squads dug in and put out flank security. Pinned down, the 3d Squad was unable to withdraw at the same time as the others. It dug in on the north slope of The Spur, where it was to remain until it rejoined the main body of Company E at the sunken road a day and a

half later. The platoon's SCR 536, which had not worked all night, was put back into operation and was instrumental in getting our artillery fire lifted. But neither the radio nor patrols from the 1st Platoon had been able to maintain contact with the 2d Platoon on the left, which had been expected to meet much stiffer resistance near the road.

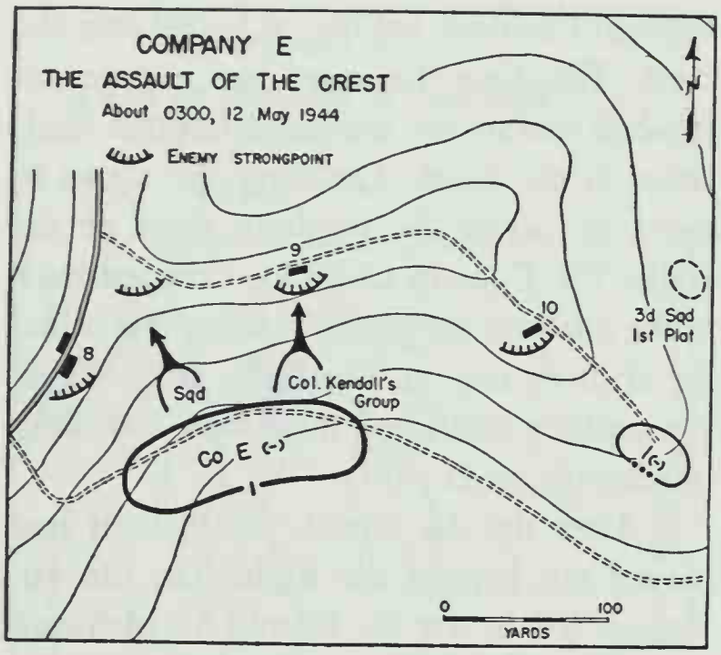
*Company E at The Spur: The Main Body*

On the left flank of Company E the two lead squads of the 2d Platoon had moved swiftly along the slope of the central ridge, meeting no resistance except sniper and artillery fire. With the left squad in sight of the road, the two squads moved over the Right Tit, crossed the draw at the base of The Spur, and went up its southern slope until they struck the sunken road. Here the 2d Platoon turned right along the sunken road for about 100 yards and then branched off, heading up the slope. It had reached a point 75 yards south of the second house from the road, No. 9, when machine guns from the crest pinned it down.

During the advance of the 2d Platoon, the 3d Squad in reserve had become separated from the two leading squads. By the time the 3d Squad reached the Right Tit, artillery and mortar fire was so heavy that further advance seemed out of the question. Before the squad had been on the Tit long, Captain Carlstone with his company headquarters group came up and led the men over the crest. Then, more heavy mortar and artillery fire forced them back to the comparative safety of shell holes and a big ditch on the southern slope of the Right Tit. Again Captain Carlstone led the 3d Squad over the crest. This time the squad had just cleared it when mortar fire wounded Captain Carlstone in the hand. Ordering the squad to move on across the northern slope of the Right Tit, Captain Carlstone dropped back to the ditch on the southern slope. He called for artillery fire on The Spur, from which our artillery had lifted their fires, according to schedule, at H+60.

After the 3d Squad, 2d Platoon had moved out beyond the Right Tit, the 4th Platoon led by 1st Lt. Harold V. McSwain came up on that hill, accompanied by most of the 3d Platoon (Map No. 11). This unit was to have followed the 1st Platoon in the right column, but somehow got lost and became sandwiched in with the 4th Platoon on the left. Informed that enemy snipers and machine guns were on the northern slope of the Right Tit near the road, Lieutenant McSwain sent Sgt. Earl Le Beau, machine-gun section leader, with three gunners to locate and wipe out the German positions. At the crest of the hill, the gunners found no machine guns and only one rifleman, whom they swiftly dispatched.

The wounded company commander put Lieutenant McSwain in charge of Company E, since his executive officer, 1st Lt. Harold W. Moore, was 1,500 yards away on the reverse slope of Cemetery Ridge. The 2d Battalion commander, Colonel Kendall, had come up on the Right Tit; disturbed because the company was lagging behind its time schedule, he pushed McSwain and his men of the 3d and 4th Platoons forward from the hill, tapping the men with his stick and urging them forward. As they moved off,




*MAP NO. 12*

Colonel Kendall and Captain Carlstone remained in a ditch on the southern slope of the Tit and kept on calling for artillery fire until it was placed on The Spur. To speed up the advance of Company E, the battalion commander also asked for tank support and ordered Company G to move up to the Right Tit, ready for use when needed.

After blasting a path through a barbed-wire entanglement with a bangalore torpedo, Lieutenant McSwain led the men over the Tit toward the road. Crossing the draw beyond the Tit, the group hacked its way through more barbed wire, and in the face of heavy artillery and mortar fire pushed on without respite to a point just below the westernmost turn of the sunken road on The Spur. There the mortar fire increased, and a stream of hand grenades and flares poured down on them from the western end of The Spur's crest. As the flares lit up the area, machine guns opened up from houses and dugouts near the crest on both flanks, inflicting many casualties on Company E.

Elements of the 2d Platoon, about 150 yards farther to the east on the slope above the sunken road, were also pinned down. They were joined by Lieutenant McSwain, acting company commander.

In the face of this heavy fire, all the elements of Company E except the 1st Platoon (isolated at the east end of The Spur) dug in along the forward slope, above and below the sunken road. Tech/Sgt. Theodore J. Kerey of the 4th Platoon reported the grave situation to Colonel Kendall, who was located 50 yards to the rear with a command group of wiremen, radio operators, and liaison officers. From this report Colonel Kendall realized that taking The Spur would require the reduction of enemy strongpoints on the crest. It was soon discovered that this would be no easy undertaking: the Germans were installed in cleverly concealed and well-constructed emplacements. As found later, there were at least 4 strongpoints, with an estimated 12 machine guns. Three of these positions were in houses 8, 9, and 10 along the crest of The Spur; the other was a dugout between the two westernmost houses. In these covered fortifications, machine guns with overlapping fields of fire completely commanded the forward slope of The Spur. Approaches around the eastern extremity were also covered (Map No. 12).

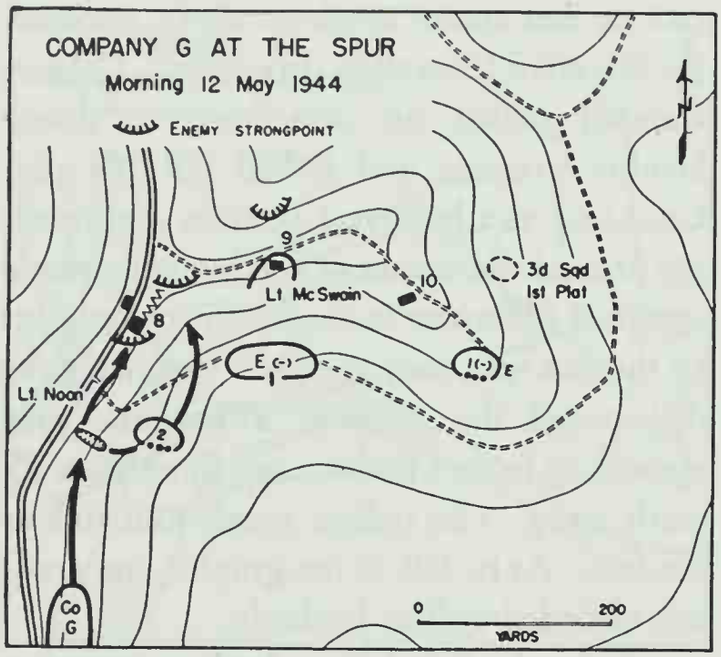
Using the only effective means at hand, Colonel Kendall set out to bring direct fire on these positions. He sent one squad from Company E, led by an officer, over to wipe out the machine-gun nest at the west end of The Spur's crest. In order to rush the emplacement the men of this squad had to climb over a terrace on the forward slope. As they

came into view over the terrace, the German machine gunners opened up with a murderous fire, mowing down nine men. Only the officer and two men got back alive.

While the western position was under attack, Colonel Kendall led a small command group and a handful of men from the 2d and 4th Platoons against a machine-gun emplacement in house No. 9. Advancing from the sunken road where he left the bulk of Company E, the battalion commander moved up the forward slope of The Spur, urging his men forward by injunction and example. Before rushing the machine-gun nest, he built up his maximum squad fire power and himself shot every weapon he could lay his hands on. Grabbing a BAR from a soldier who was not using it, Colonel Kendall emptied it at the machine-gun emplacement in the house. He then successively fired a carbine until he had used up all its ammunition, an M–1 rifle, and antitank rifle grenades. After that he seized a bazooka (rocket launcher), which was being loaded by an artillery observer, and directed three rounds at the pillbox. The first two shots sailed over the target, but the third struck it squarely. He then sent three men around the house to envelop the position. They did not go far before machine-gun fire pinned them down in a shell crater on top of The Spur. Meanwhile, calling on his other men to follow him, Colonel Kendall rushed toward the house. As he approached it, he stood up and threw two grenades at the enemy machine gunners, killing some of them and driving the rest across the top of The Spur to alternate positions about 50 to 100 yards away. Apparently not realizing that by his inspired attack he had almost single-handedly knocked the Germans from their strongpoint, Colonel Kendall pulled his arm back to throw another grenade and jerked out the pin. Crouched in a half-erect position and bending around the corner of the house he made a perfect silhouette in the bright moonlight. In the last split second before Colonel Kendall tossed the grenade, a machine gun opened up from a position not more than 75 yards away. The bullets struck him full in the face. As he fell to the ground, the grenade exploded against his body.

Colonel Kendall's death, occurring sometime between 0300 and 0330, brought a temporary stop to the attack on the enemy strongpoints. Assuming command of the group which Colonel Kendall had led up the hill, Lieutenant McSwain ordered them to dig in around the house, No. 9, and he posted a handful of men in the building itself. While they were digging in, a machine-gun squad of the 4th Platoon, which had set up in front of the sunken road, opened fire on the men around the house. One burst knocked the shovel from the hands of Sergeant Kerey, who was digging in on the crest. The machine guns got off a few more bursts before Cpl. Joseph Murray, the squad leader, identified the men on the crest as our own troops and stopped the fire.

Company E was in a precarious position. Its men were scattered over The Spur: the remnants of the 1st Platoon, a handful from the 2d and 4th Platoons, and Colonel Kendall's command group were on the crest; and the larger part, consisting of skeleton squads of the 2d, 3d, and 4th Platoons, was dug in against terraces above and below the sunken




*MAP NO. 13*

road. The Germans had not been dislodged from their strongpoints and the effective strength of Company E had been whittled down considerably. During the first eight hours 89 men from the company had been killed or wounded. Its repeated appeals for tank assistance against the pillboxes had apparently gone unanswered.

Actually, Company E's request for tanks had not brought help because the tanks had run into so much opposition they could not reach The Spur. As soon as Colonel Kendall had reached the base of The Spur he had called for armor to blast the machine-gun positions in the houses and bunkers along the road. With that opposition neutralized, Company G and the tanks could move up swiftly and aid the disorganized group on The Spur.

Some hours before this request for tanks the 20-man mine platoon of the Antitank Company, under the command of Capt. Clarence R. Meeks, had gone out, according to the initial plan, to demine the ridge road. Heavy fire from machine guns and snipers near the Tits had forced the platoon into a ditch. A stretch of Teller mines about 75 yards long, located between the Tits, remained untouched.

At 0300, in response to Colonel Kendall's request, five medium tanks from Company C, 760th Tank Battalion under 1st Lt. Eugene E. Gleissner, moved down the Minturno–Santa Maria road. Two of them remained out of the enemy's sight along the step of the stairway curve at the cemetery, while the other three pushed forward. At the Left Tit the leading tank, carrying the platoon leader, was hit by a mine and disabled, and Lieutenant Gleissner was so dazed by the explosion that he returned to the regimental command post. The advance of the armored column came to a standstill.

Spurred by the infantry's calls for assistance, 1st Lt. Paul F. Scholer and 1st Lt. Wilbur R. Crowley, tank liaison officers with the 351st Infantry, went up in a half-track to the stalled vehicles. By dint of their efforts the second tank moved forward. Before advancing more than a few yards it, too, hit a mine which disabled it and injured Lieutenant Scholer, Lieutenant Crowley, and S/Sgt. Pinckney D. Upchurch. The explosion put the tank squarely astride the road, blocking the way to a further advance.

The failure of this second attempt brought Col. Arthur S. Champeny, the regimental commander, up to supervise the tanks and reorganize the attack. The ranking sergeant in the tank detachment refused to try to push forward again, so another sergeant assumed command. He attempted to move the third tank up; this tank hit another mine. It was then about 0500, and Colonel Champeny

sent a call to the 88th Division for another platoon of tanks to come up and wipe out the machine-gun nests. The requested reinforcements did not arrive for several hours; meanwhile Company G, which with the aid of the tanks was to have wiped out the enemy's strong positions on The Spur, became pinned down.

### *Company G is Stopped at The Spur*

At the time Company E reached The Spur, Colonel Champeny had ordered Company G forward from Hill 130 where Colonel Kendall left it in reserve. As soon as Company G, marching single file in a column of platoons, reached the southern base of the Right Tit, a German machine gun opened fire from a bunker near the crest or from across the road on the left. It was another case of a bypassed enemy position reserving its fire for later use against support elements of the 351st. The column stopped and the men jumped in shell holes and flopped behind terraces. Colonel Champeny sent a squad to wipe out the enemy machine gun and Pvt. Harold W. Saager knocked it out with a rifle grenade.

Scarcely had this mission been carried out when Company G received word that Colonel Kendall had been killed and that the tanks were stopped on the road. The company had suffered only light casualties and was ordered forward to assist Company E. As the men pushed down the slope of the Right Tit, the company commander, 1st Lt. Theodore W. Noon, Jr., could see his men as far as 50 yards away in the bright moonlight. With the 1st Platoon leading, Company G reached the southern slope of The Spur near its western end before machine-gun fire from house No. 8, dead ahead and close to the road, stopped the advance. Dawn was breaking when Company G reached this point, which was protected from frontal fire by terraces (Map No. 13).

Lieutenant Noon ordered the 2d Platoon to come up on the left of the 1st Platoon. Trying to advance under heavy machine-gun fire, the 2d Platoon could not get up. As the fire continued, the 1st and 2d Platoons sheltered in a ditch four feet deep and eight yards wide near the westernmost bend of the sunken road. Deciding to reduce the position by a flanking movement, Lieutenant Noon sent the 2d Platoon to the right of the 1st. The 3d Platoon remained in the draw at the base of The Spur where mortars of the 4th Platoon had been set up. Light machine guns were called up but were not able to get in a position from which they could effectively support the attack.

The 2d Platoon moved out from the ditch and around toward the right of the house in a formation of two squads abreast and one in reserve. It managed to cross a couple of terraces and get within 30 yards of the building. There, with only open ground in front of it, the platoon was pinned down by fire from its objective and from another machine gun northeast of the house. Seeing that the 2d Platoon could not advance, Lieutenant Noon decided to assault this position himself. Followed by two enlisted men, he crawled out of the trench where the 1st Platoon was crouched. As the attacking party advanced, the machine gun under attack fired high, but Germans in a communication

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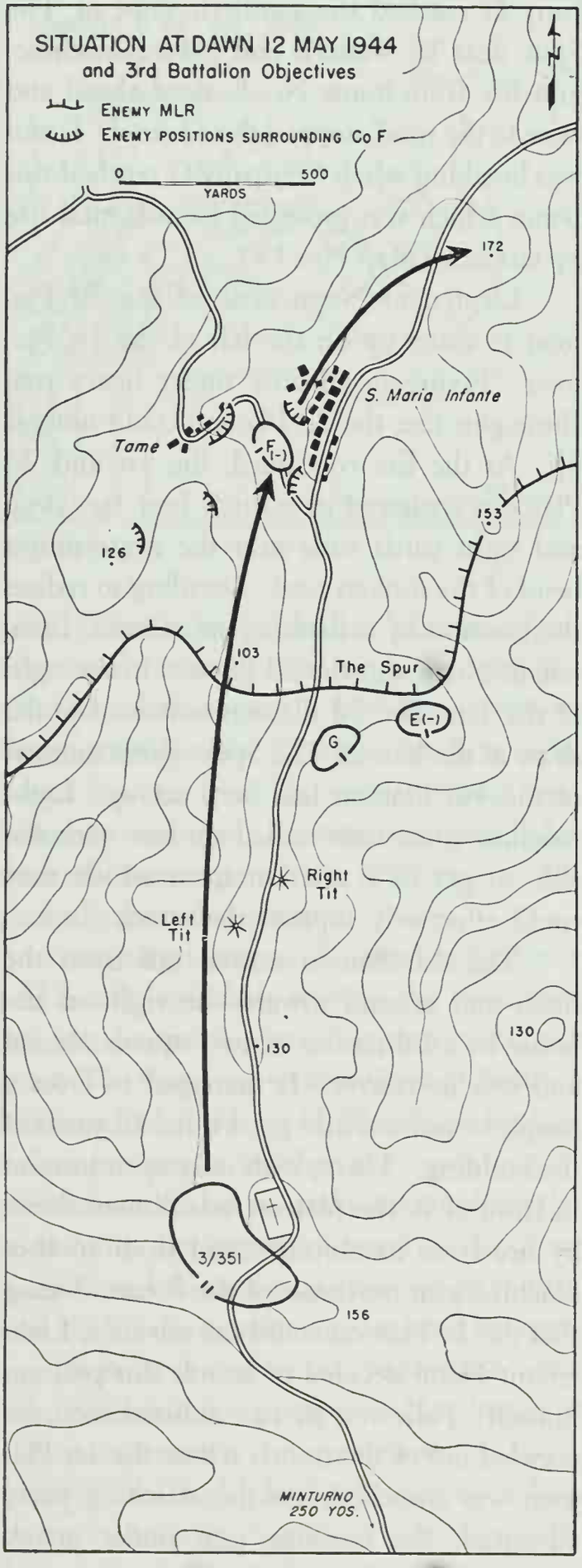



*MAP NO. 14*

trench which ran from the house to other machine-gun positions on The Spur killed the two enlisted men. Lieutenant Noon's luck held out. Closing in on the house, he knocked out the machine gun with a hand grenade and pistol fire and then returned to the ditch.

Despite this success Company G continued to be held down by heavy machine-gun and sniper fire from other enemy positions on the crest of The Spur. At about 0700, the daring action of S/Sgt. Richard G. Brine removed some of the active Germans. Several enemy snipers had been causing trouble from the same house where Lieutenant Noon had knocked out the machine gun. Sergeant Brine and two other men crawled forward to deal with the snipers. Both of the men with Sergeant Brine were severely wounded by machine guns which opened up on the right and left of the snipers' position. Under this heavy fire Sergeant Brine kept firing on the snipers, killing several and forcing the remainder to withdraw. Observing that the company was now under fire from the machine guns on either side of the house and that the Weapons Platoon was pinned down in the open and suffering heavy losses, he crawled into an opening in the rear of the building from which vantage point he fired his rifle at both the machine guns. This action drew the enemy's fire and allowed the Weapons Platoon to take cover.

In spite of the heroic efforts of many men, the night attack of the 2d Battalion had not achieved any of its objectives. On the battalion left, elements of Company F had advanced almost to its objective at the culvert, but were there pinned down and en-

circled by enemy forces. The battalion's greatest danger was that its left flank was exposed: on the west slopes of the central ridge, no effective strength remained between the surrounded Company F force and the cemetery. During the night, troops of the 338th Infantry had driven across the crest of Hill 131 into the village of Solacciano, but were pushed back to the base of the S-Ridge. With the German main line of resistance there still intact, machine guns on the crest and eastern slope of the S-Ridge could bring devastating fire on the Minturno–Santa Maria road and all routes of approach to Company F's beleaguered group at the culvert.

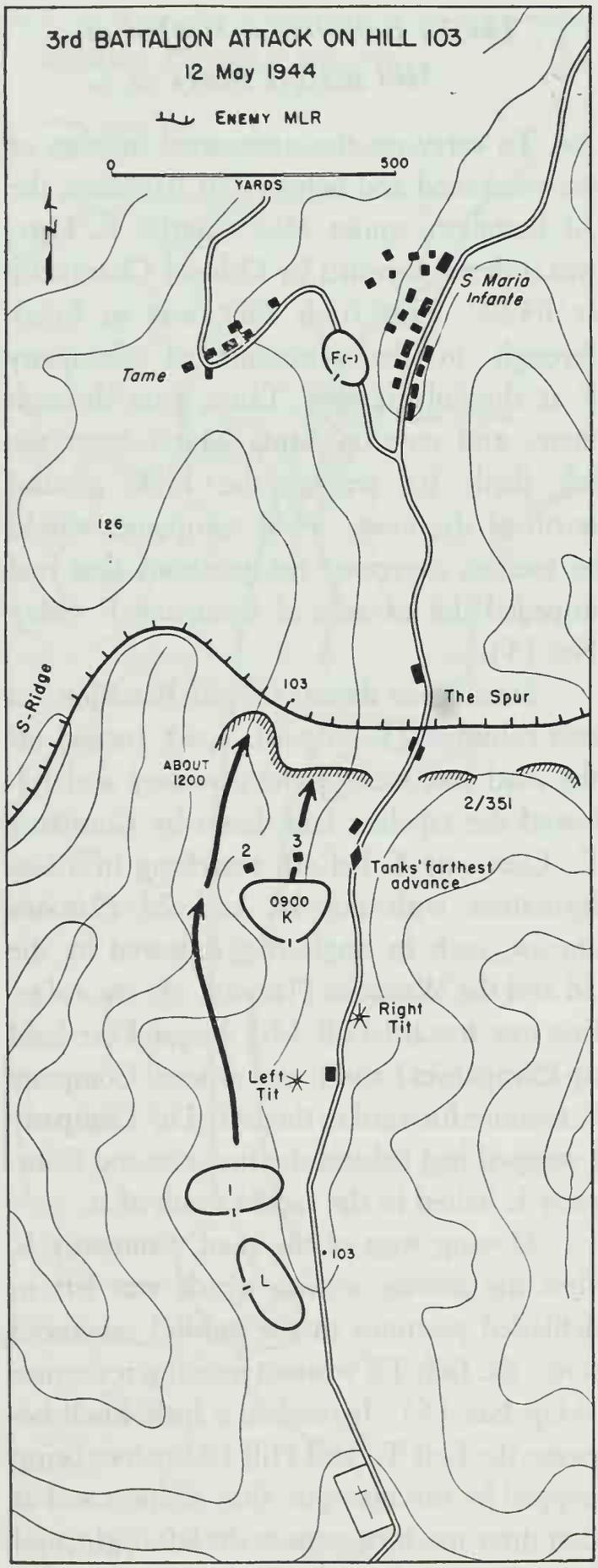
On the right of the ridge road to Santa Maria, things were not much better. By 0900 Company G, which had attempted to wipe out resistance and relieve Company E, had been able to move only one-third of the way up the southern slope of The Spur, where it was dug in against the side of a terrace. Those few men who got north of the sunken road had to withdraw in the face of heavy enemy fire; all the platoons of the company had suffered casualties and were in some confusion. Elements of Company E were still dug in on the crest of The Spur, over 1,500 yards beyond the line of departure, but these men could not move. The bulk of that company was pinned down on the forward slope, and the company had suffered so many casualties that its effective strength was insufficient to regain the initiative. Although the efforts of both companies on the battalion's right flank had reduced some enemy positions, those which remained were strong enough to frustrate further advance.

### *The 3d Battalion is Stopped at Hill 103 (12 May)*

To carry on the unfinished mission of the weakened and helpless 2d Battalion, the 3d Battalion, under Maj. Charles P. Furr, was ordered forward by Colonel Champeny at 0420. This fresh unit was to break through to the remnants of Company F at the culvert near Tame, pass through them, and envelop Santa Maria from the left flank by seizing the high ground north of the town. Four companies would be used to overcome the positions that had impeded the advance of Company F (Map No. 14).

Starting at dawn, the 3d Battalion, in two columns 25–30 yards apart, turned off the road just west of the cemetery and followed the tapeline laid down by Company F. Company K led off, marching in a box formation with the 1st and 2d Platoons abreast, each in single file, followed by the 3d and the Weapons Platoons. As the ridgeline rose toward Hill 130, Major Furr held up Companies I and L and ordered Company K to move forward to the Left Tit. Company I stopped just behind the first rise and Company L halted in the saddle south of it.

Moving west of the road, Company K (less the mortar section which was left in defiladed positions in the saddle) advanced across the Left Tit without meeting resistance (Map No. 15). It reached a little knoll between the Left Tit and Hill 103 before being stopped by machine-gun fire. Snipers and at least three machine guns to the left, right, and immediate front of the 2d Platoon halted it just south of house No. 2 at 0900. For over




*MAP NO. 15*

two hours the 2d Platoon stayed there. During the halt it deployed in a staggered line and built up defensive positions to the left flank of the 1st Platoon, which was on the company's right. Fire from another house, No. 3, stopped the 1st Platoon. The 3d Squad was sent out to wipe out the position, and their fire forced the Germans to withdraw (as events later proved) to an alternate position down the slope of the little knoll.

Major Furr ordered Company I, under Capt. Glenn H. Erickson, to come up on the left flank to help Company K push forward. While Company K, with its right flank on the road, made a frontal assault on Hill 103, Company I would envelop the enemy positions from the west. Each company was to attack in formation of two rifle platoons abreast and one in support. The Weapons Platoon would support the attack from the crest and southern slope of the little knoll. Company L was still in reserve. Company M's machine guns were ordered to displace forward to the knoll, there to support the attack by fire on Hill 103 and the S-Ridge. One section of heavy machine guns set up west of house No. 2, the other section moved forward and set up behind Company K.

About 1115 Companies K and I jumped off toward Hill 103. On the battalion right flank the 1st Platoon of Company K—its three squads abreast and deployed in a skirmish line—pushed down the northern slope of the knoll in the face of heavy machine-gun fire from the S-Ridge as well as from the forward slope of Hill 103. On the platoon's left, the 2d Squad advanced under partial cover of terraces across the draw and a short distance up the southern

slope of Hill 103, where it was stopped by machine-gun fire from the crest and from the rear. The 1st and 3d Squads on the right could advance only to the draw at the base of the hill before fire pinned them down.

On the left the 2d Platoon of Company K pushed on down the knoll to the draw south of Hill 103. Hardly had the platoon reached the draw when a machine gun on the northern slope of the knoll started firing on the platoon from the right rear, forcing the men to seek cover. The Germans who had been driven out of the house near the road by the 1st Platoon had waited until both platoons got past them before they began to fire. Machine guns on Hill 103 and the S-Ridge sprayed the area where the men of Company K hugged the ground. Well-placed snipers on Hill 103 also trained their rifles on Company K.

In visual contact with Company K and on its left, the two leading assault platoons of Company I moved up the western slope of Hill 103 a few yards beyond the farthest advance of Company K; then, enemy fire from mortars, artillery, and machine guns halted their attack. Company I's 3d Platoon was in a very exposed spot near the western base of Hill 103, receiving casualties from two machine guns and a few riflemen. Only the resourceful action of Pvt. Walker C. Lopez enabled the platoon to reach positions sheltered from enemy fire. Taking a BAR from an automatic rifleman who had been so severely wounded that he could not operate his weapon, Private Lopez, though not a member of the BAR team, crawled forward about 20 yards. From a position which was in full view of the enemy, but which offered good observation, he fired so effectively that both machine guns were silenced. Freed from the menace of this fire, the platoon then maneuvered into covered positions. The 1st Platoon, Company I, advancing on the right, also reached the western slope of Hill 103 and suffered much heavier casualties than the other assault platoon. By the time the platoon reached Hill 103 it had barely the strength of one squad.

Half an hour after both companies had begun their attack against Hill 103 they were stopped cold. For the rest of the day Companies K and I remained dug in at the base and on the lower slope of Hill 103, where they had to depend on the inadequate cover provided by shallow ditches and shell-holes. Their only action the rest of the day was to put bazooka and small-arms fire at enemy positions on Hill 103 and the S-Ridge. The supporting fire of mortars, artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers had proved disappointing during the 3d Battalion's attack. Enemy pillboxes in the Santa Maria–Mt. Bracchi–Pulcherini area were not appreciably weakened by fire from all these weapons in the morning of 12 May. Even a direct hit by a 105-mm howitzer or heavy mortar shell did little damage to the well-protected overhead covers of the machine-gun dugouts. To knock them out, a shell had to hit squarely in the narrow embrasures where the guns looked out.

The armored support was held up by problems of mine clearance, swampy terrain, and poor visibility. The mine platoon of the Antitank Company, which had failed in its mission due to enemy fire, had been able to come out of its shelter at about 0600 and had

begun removing the mines in the road between the Tits and The Spur. When the morning haze lifted, toward noon, a platoon of five tanks got underway and advanced to a point beyond the Tits. With 1st Lt. Fillmore W. McAbee, liaison officer, riding in the tank and pointing out targets along the road, the platoon knocked out two machine-gun nests. Before the action was over, however, the enemy inflicted heavy damage on the armored column, putting three of our tanks out of action.

Another tank effort was made along the road in the afternoon. At 1500, after being held up by mud at a culvert, one platoon of Company A, 760th Tank Battalion, commanded by 1st Lt. Clinton F. Des Jardins, cleared the way and moved down the road toward Santa Maria. Advancing past the Minturno cemetery it drew up just short of the Tits at 1545. With the assistance of infantrymen who crawled up to the tanks and pointed out the strongpoints along the road, the tanks went on beyond the Right Tit and knocked out an enemy self-propelled gun as well as approximately 20 sniper and machine-gun positions. After moving a few yards farther down the road toward The Spur, Lieutenant Des Jardins' tank was hit by an armor-piercing shell from another German self-propelled gun. As it started to burn, the crew jumped out and hid in a nearby wall where they remained for more than 24 hours until they were picked up by troops of the 351st Infantry. Two more tanks were put out of action and the rest pulled back behind the cemetery.

On the right flank of the 351st Infantry another group of tanks tried to reach Santa Maria. Under an order from the 88th Division, tanks from Company B, 760th Tank Battalion were to move from Tufo Ridge to Hills 132 and 130, follow the jeep trail down the slope to the draw in front of Pulcherini, cross Reali Creek, and fan out in the direction of Mount Cerreto, Pulcherini, and the high ground east and north of Santa Maria. Starting out from an assembly area near Tufo, Company B moved forward only a short distance before it bogged down in a marshy area north of the town.

### *Capture of Company F (12 May)*

All through the day of the 12th, Company F at the culvert was in a state of siege. From all sides mortar, artillery, and machine-gun fire fell near the group dug in around the culvert. Air bursts splattered the area. A mortar, tucked away in a haystack on the eastern slope of Hill 126, lobbed shells near the culvert. From Santa Maria and the S-Ridge, machine guns kept up harassing fire on Company F; from the rear along the Minturno–Santa Maria road, other automatic weapons were trained on our embattled troops; and German snipers in the creek bed took pot shots whenever a head poked above a fox hole or the slightest movement was detected around the culvert. The heaviest fire came from Tame. Machine gunners and snipers in the hamlet, less than 200 yards away, fired at the culvert and the half-circle of fox holes around it. The men of Company F fired back, but their force was small and their ammunition stocks dwindling. During the afternoon enemy tanks added to Company F's troubles. They came along the

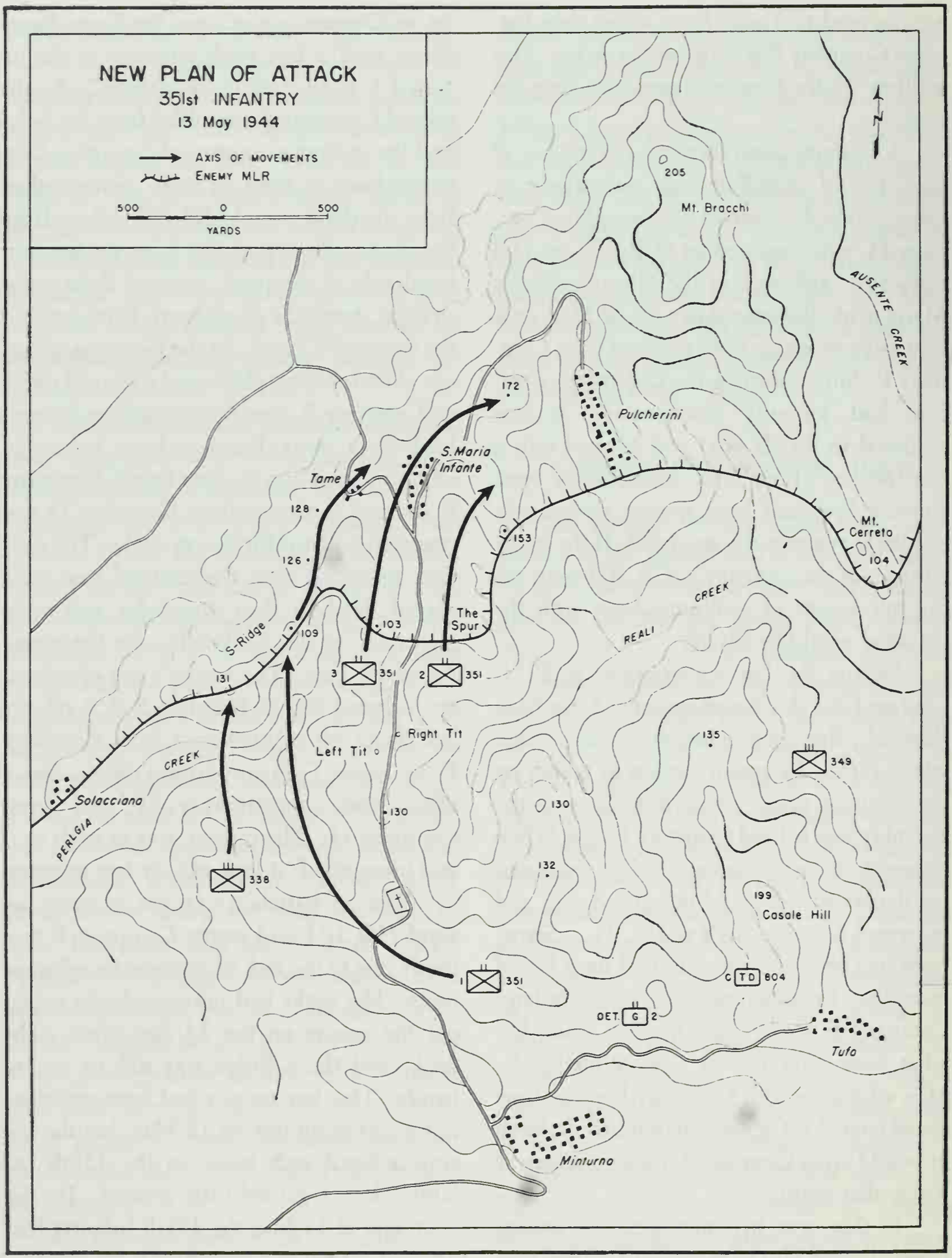
Spigno road to Tame, from which they harassed Company F with point-blank fire. Our artillery finally dispersed them, knocking out two.

Communication between Company F and the 2d Battalion was maintained by Capt. Edward J. Church, commanding Company H, who operated an SCR 300 on Hill 130, 800 yards west of the Minturno–Santa Maria road. But after dawn on 12 May, only four radio messages were received from Company F. Since morning the Company's situation had seriously deteriorated. It was hemmed in on all sides and pressed into a tiny pocket. Food and ammunition were running low, and litter bearers were sorely needed to evacuate the wounded. If the feeble batteries of the company's SCR 300 went out the sole means of communication with the battalion would be cut off.

During the last conversation, at 2015, Captain Church relayed an order from Maj. Edwin L. Shull, acting battalion commander, which directed Captain Nelson to withdraw the company under cover of darkness to the assembly area behind Cemetery Ridge. When he heard the order, Captain Nelson expressed his doubts that it could be carried out, and reiterated his company's plight. ". . . Somebody had better do something. I have lots of casualties. I need supplies." A moment later Company F tried to get through again, but what came over the air was unintelligible. Men who were with Company F at the time stated later that Captain Nelson had declared he would bring Company F back to Cemetery Ridge that night.

If that was his intention, the enemy never allowed him to carry it out. After sunset, six Germans came across the Tame–Santa Maria road, a few yards southeast of the inverted V-bend, calling "Kamerad." As the men of Company F scrambled from fox holes and the culvert to capture them, other Germans closed in from all sides. Some rushed from the draw east of Hill 126, others from the Y-junction across the slope on the left-hand side of the road; most of them came straight down the road from Tame around the inverted V-bend. As the Germans spilled out of their hiding places and streamed down on Company F, one of our machine gunners let loose a short, harmless burst before an officer ordered him to cease firing. Company F and half a platoon from Company H surrendered without further struggle. The only ones to escape were five enlisted men who played dead in their fox holes and were picked up by the 3d Battalion on the morning of 14 May. The enemy's bag of prisoners included the 2d Battalion S–2, 4 officers and about 60 enlisted men from Company F, a Cannon Company liaison officer, and 1 officer and approximately 20 men from Company H. The capture was as swift as it was unexpected: it took exactly five minutes.

The 3d Battalion's failure to move beyond Hill 103 and rescue Company F was partly due to the lack of progress by adjacent units. The tanks had not completely wiped out the enemy on the 3d Battalion's right flank, and the S-Ridge was still in enemy hands. This key terrain had been assaulted again and again during 12 May, but the enemy inflicted such losses on the 338th Infantry that it gained little ground. By the afternoon of 13 May the 338th Infantry had suffered 50 percent casualties.


NEW PLAN OF ATTACK
351st INFANTRY
13 May 1944
AXIS OF MOVEMENTS
ENEMY MLR
500 0 500
YARDS
N
205
Mt. Bracchi
AUSENTE CREEK
172
Pulcherini
S. Maria Infante
Tame
128
126
153
Mt. Cerreto
104
CREEK
REALI
The Spur
103
S-Ridge
109
131
3 351
2 351
Left Tit
Right Tit
135
349
CREEK
Solacciano
PERLGIA
130
130
132
338
199
Casale Hill
1 351
C TD 804
DET G 2
Tufo
Minturno

*MAP NO. 16*

THE BARE SLOPES OF THE S-RIDGE *gave little cover for troops of the 351st attacking from the creek valley (left). This view, taken from the northeast on the Minturno–Santa Maria road, looks across the S-Ridge to the Tyrrhenian Sea in the background.*

During the night of 12/13 May the resumption of the offensive was postponed. The 88th Division had received information at noon on 12 May that a major counterattack was forming for that night, preceded by a minor one during the last hour of daylight. To meet the threat the 351st Infantry was alerted, and the 913th Field Artillery Battalion was ordered to adjust fire on the enemy. The artillery fire failed to upset the enemy plan of attack, and it was only after stiff fighting that the 3d Battalion managed to beat off the waves of enemy infantry. On the other side of the Minturno–Santa Maria road, tank destroyers firing from Tufo Ridge tried to soften up the enemy positions along the crest of The Spur, without success.

Fresh troops and supplies were urgently needed to reinforce the depleted 2d and 3d Battalions. In the 2d Battalion, Company F had ceased to exist; Companies E and G had lost so many killed and wounded that they were about half their original size. The 3d Battalion's assaulting companies, K and I, had fared little better. Altogether the regiment had sustained 361 casualties during 11–12 May, including 68 killed, 191 wounded, and 92 missing in action. During the night 125 replacements, who had been trained by the regiment, were sent up to the rifle companies with guides. This intended relief turned out to be a minor catastrophe. Many of the new men were killed or wounded by enemy fire on the way; others straggled or took shelter in shell holes; only a few reached the forward positions.

Evacuating the wounded and bringing up supplies under heavy and constant shellfire were dangerous operations. Of 60 Italian civilian carriers used in the Santa Maria battle, 23 were killed. Ammunition and rations were brought by jeep from the regimental dump east of Minturno to the battalion dumps established along the Santa Maria

road. From these points battalion ammunition and pioneer platoons and the Italian civilians packed the supplies up to the front-line troops. Three regular litter teams from each battalion and the cooks from the company kitchens did yeoman service in bearing the wounded back to evacuation points south of the Tits. There jeep ambulances, which could take four litter cases each, picked them up and delivered them post haste to battalion aid stations.

Poor communications among units of the 351st Infantry were still causing trouble for the attacking forces. Keeping contact proved a hard task both day and night, with mechanical difficulties and hill contours interfering with transmission and reception of the 536 radios. The new SCR 300 radio, however, used in company, battalion, and regimental headquarters stood up well under the most trying combat conditions. Mortar and artillery fire wreaked havoc with the telephone lines. Although wiremen, creeping and crawling to escape small-arms fire, laid as many as 12 lines, they were never able to keep more than 5 in operation at one time. Frequently all of them were out of commission. Jeeps carried the wire up the Minturno–Santa Maria road as far as possible; the rest of the way it was laid by hand. Messengers, who were used when other means failed, found the going tough at all times.

### *Plans for Renewed Attack (13 May)*

The failure to reach Santa Maria after repeated efforts during 11–12 May necessitated new plans for a coordinated attack (Map No. 16, page 156). At 1100, 13 May the commanding generals of the 88th and 85th Divisions, with their subordinate commanders, Colonel Champeny of the 351st and Col. Fred A. Safay of the 338th Infantry, met at the 88th Division CP in Minturno to draw up plans. They decided that the 338th and 351st Infantry would again attack simultaneously against the twin objectives, the S-Ridge and Santa Maria. But because the 338th Infantry had been so weakened in its attack against the stubbornly held S-Ridge, fresh troops from the 351st Infantry would take responsibility for seizing a part of this key ridge, and the divisional boundaries were shifted west to place Hills 109, 126, and 128 in the zone of the 351st.

Under this plan the 351st Infantry would make thrusts on each side of the ridge road to take the high ground east and north of Santa Maria. In addition it would drive the Germans from the S-Ridge at Hill 109, then swing north on that ridge line and take Hills 126, 128, and Tame. The 338th Infantry on the left would push across the S-Ridge to seize Hill 131. The 351st Infantry's right boundary was shifted to the west so that the 349th Infantry could take over the zone of the 1st Battalion, 351st Infantry, which would be used to attack the S-Ridge.

Colonel Champeny drew up an assault plan for the 351st Infantry which provided for use of all three battalions. The 2d and 3d Battalions would push forward from their positions on each side of the ridge road, with their left flank protected by the 1st Battalion's attack against the S-Ridge. From their hard-won fox holes on The Spur, Company E on the left and Company G on the right would advance across the crest and around the east-

ern edge of the hill, follow the slope along the east side of the road, and take the high ground east of Santa Maria. At the same time Companies I and L, jumping off from the forward slope of Hill 103, would move along the western side of the road and seize the high ground north of the town. The 1st Battalion was to advance from the draw between the S-Ridge and the high ground along the road, take Hill 109, then swing north on the S-Ridge to Tame.

Enemy positions were softened up before the attack. At 1225 three American fighter-bombers dropped six or seven bombs on Santa Maria and strafed enemy positions in the town. A few minutes later, 3 of 22 attacking FW–190's broke through a cordon of Spitfires and P–40's to drop a few bombs between The Spur and Minturno. The only one that caused damage hit the 3d Battalion aid station on the trail back of Cemetery Ridge, wounding several men. Although not without harassing and morale value, neither the German nor the American air attacks substantially influenced the course of the battle for Santa Maria.

At 1415, tank destroyers from Tufo Ridge and Casale Hill opened up on the dugouts and houses on The Spur. This fire fell uncomfortably close to Company E, but because of its effectiveness it was continued for 45 minutes. Using information furnished by Capt. Gilmer M. Heitman, Jr., 2d Battalion adjutant who had located the enemy strongpoints, and relying on .50-cal. tracers to identify them, the tank destroyers scored two or perhaps three direct hits on the targets. To cover the attack of the 351st Infantry, the 2d Chemical Battalion and the 913th Field Artillery Battalion, assisted by the corps artillery, laid down a preparation of several hundred rounds of smoke, white phosphorus, and high explosive shells on Santa Maria and Pulcherini. The concentrations began at 1825; they were heavy and properly placed.

The time for the attack of the 338th Infantry and the 351st Infantry was originally set for 1600. As the 1st Battalion could not reach its jump-off position in time, Colonel Champeny requested the commander of the 88th Division to postpone the attack half an hour. Even this stay was not sufficient and Colonel Champeny then asked that the time for the attack be pushed back to 1830. The request was granted, but the delay was to apply only to the 351st Infantry. On the left flank the 338th Infantry was to jump off at 1630, in accordance with the original half-hour postponement.

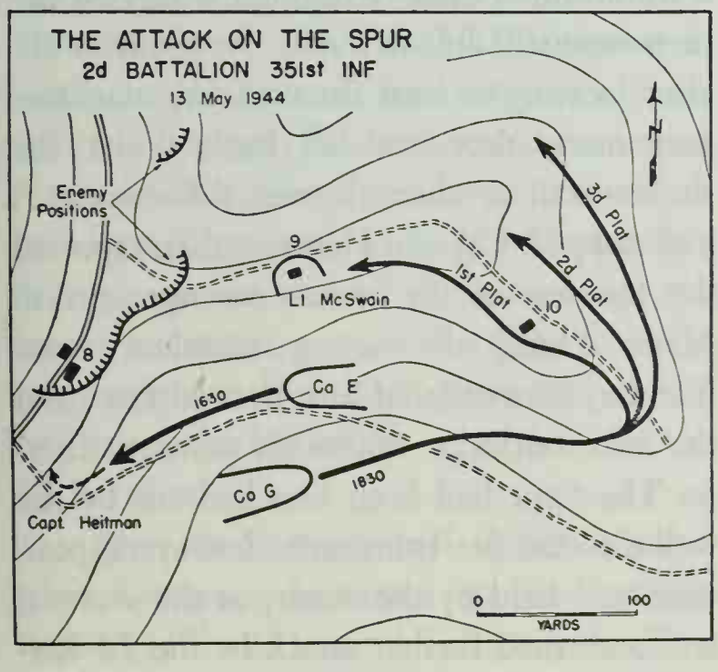
The eastern positions on the crest of The Spur would be attacked by Company G. From its dug-in positions along the sunken road, Company G would wheel past Company E toward the eastern end of The Spur, then cut back sharply along the crest. Occupying positions on the crest, Company G would wait until it got word to push on into Santa Maria. Company E, attacking at the same time, would move out from the sunken road over the western end of The Spur, knock out the machine-gun nests there, and take the high ground east of Santa Maria. Although the two units were operating close to each other, various difficulties, including failure to get word of the postponed hour of attack, were to upset the coordination of the 2d Battalion attack.

TERRAIN OF LATER ATTACKS, *13 May 1944*

### *The Enemy Holds Out on The Spur (13 May)*

Company G received its orders to attack sufficiently ahead of time to allow a brief reconnaissance of its objectives. At about 1530 Lieutenant Noon, the company commander, and his officers went around the eastern extremity of The Spur. No sooner had they reached the reverse slope than they were caught in a heavy mortar barrage. Lieutenant Noon, in advance of the other officers, was wounded severely in both legs. His fellow officers were unable to reach him and returned to the company to launch the attack at 1630.

The company moved out in a column of platoons, 3d, 1st, 2d, and 4th in that order, from its dug-in positions one-third of the way up the forward slope of The Spur (Map No. 17). After double-timing to the eastern slope, Company G changed its formation to two rifle platoons abreast and forward, and one in the rear, each platoon deployed in a wedge with two squads forward and one in support. When fire was first received, the forward squads in the platoons built up in a skirmish line. The mortar section of the Weapons Platoon supported the attack from defiladed positions in the draw south of The Spur, and the machine-gun section followed the 1st Platoon at supporting distance.




*MAP NO. 17*

The 3d Platoon on the right advanced across the eastern prong of The Spur and then half way over the northern slope toward the road. Here it was pinned down by machine-gun fire from positions at the western end of the crest. On the left of the 3d Platoon, the 1st had cut straight up along the crest of the eastern slope. Almost to the top, the 1st Platoon was stopped by machine-gun fire from the same positions that checked the advance of the 3d Platoon. Just ahead of the 1st Platoon was a little dip in the ground at the eastern end of the crest. Every time the men stuck their heads over the edge of the dip, grazing machine-gun fire met them.

Having lost contact with the 3d Platoon on the right, 1st Lt. William G. Hohenadel, 1st Platoon leader, called up the 2d Platoon, which moved up swiftly on the right of the 1st Platoon. It came under the machine-gun fire covering the backbone of The Spur. Unable to advance frontally across the little dip (where the 2d Platoon dug in), the 1st Platoon swung to the left and fired on some men it saw in fox holes around house No. 9 whom it took to be Germans. The presumed enemy was the group from Company E, under Lieutenant McSwain, who had dug in near house No. 9 after Colonel Kendall was killed.

These men had received orders to join the rest of Company E at the sunken road and were trying to do so when caught in the mistaken fire from Company G. To stop this fire 1st Lt. Pat G. Combs, artillery liaison officer with McSwain's group, held up his helmet on a rifle. When the 1st Platoon continued to take pot shots at him, he stood upright. The men from Company G then recognized him and ceased firing, though not before they had seriously wounded Lieutenant McSwain.

After the Company E men, who had held out on the crest of The Spur for a day and a half, rolled and crawled down to their comrades at the sunken road, the 1st Platoon, Company G dug in around house No. 9. Farther to the east, the 2d Platoon was dug in at the military crest on the end of The Spur. The 3d Platoon had dug in on the northern slope.

On the 2d Battalion's left flank, Company E had even less success than Company G. At 1530, Captain Heitman, now in command of Company E, received an order from Colonel Champeny over the SCR 300 radio, giving the plan of the company attack with the jump-off time as 1630. Receiving no word of the postponement to 1830, Captain Heitman began his attack at 1630, not waiting for Lieutenant McSwain's group on the crest who had been ordered to join the company at the sunken road. Captain Heitman led the men from their dug-in positions west along the road in single file. After moving toward the central ridge a few yards beyond a bend in the road, Captain Heitman, at the head of the column, cut back sharply toward the immediate objectives of Company E, the German machine-gun nest on the western end of The Spur's crest. As soon as Captain Heitman and Pfcs. Earl R. Baish and Joseph C. Stockmal following just behind him turned off from the sunken road, they came under heavy fire from the machine guns on the crest. At the sound of the fire, the rest of Company E, which had not yet rounded the bend, stopped dead in its tracks.

The two leading men and Captain Heitman jumped into a ditch that crossed the sunken road. From the direction of the machine-gun fire, Heitman located the enemy position and threw three grenades at it. In response German machine guns opened up from new positions on the crest at the men in the ditch, forcing Captain Heitman and Privates Baish and Stockmal to dig in against a 4-foot bank below the sunken road. Captain Heitman then crawled up to the bank and with single shots picked off three men who were manning one machine gun while other Germans from the same or nearby positions heaved grenade after grenade at the group. Only one of the grenades struck home, but it hit all three men. Although wounded the men were still able to move. At about 1800, after locating at least three enemy machine-gun nests, they crawled back down the sunken trail to where the rest of Company E had stopped. Captain Heitman then reported the location of the enemy strongpoints to Major Shull, the acting battalion commander, who ordered him to hold fast until the next morning. Although some positions on The Spur had been knocked out by the well-directed fire from tank destroyers, positions still held by the enemy at the western end prevented further attack by the 2d Battalion on 13 May.

### *Hill 103 Again Stops the 3d Battalion*

At least three dugouts with one or more machine guns in each faced the troops of the 3d Battalion from the crest of Hill 103. In addition to the machine-gun positions on the crest, snipers posted in houses along the road and on Hill 103 were a threat to advancing troops. To attack the hill the same general plan as was used the day before would be followed. With Company K forming a base of fire, Company L would pass through Company K and assault Hill 103 frontally. Company I would simultaneously make an end run around the west of the hill to envelop the strongpoint from the rear. It was hoped that the 1st Battalion attack against the S-Ridge would progress swiftly enough to remove the danger of heavy fire from the 3d Battalion's left flank (Map No. 18).

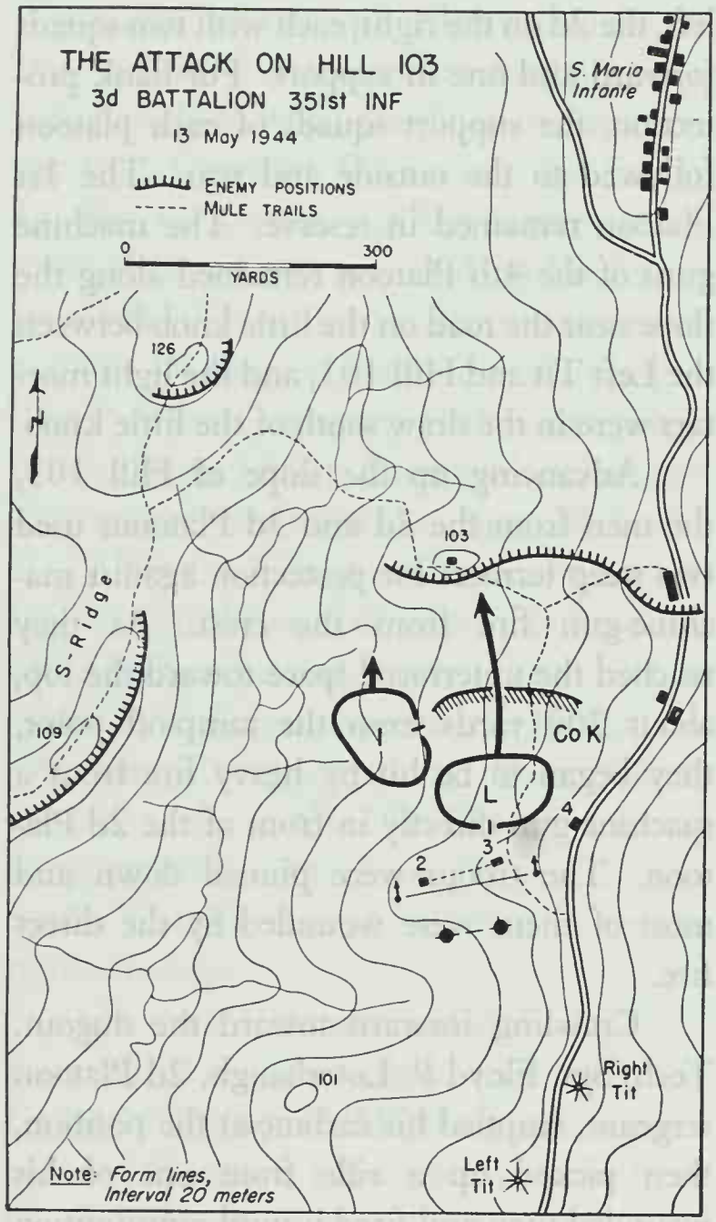
Between 1300 and 1400 1st Lt. Edward G. Sautter, who the day before had assumed command of Company L after Capt. Harold B. Ayres was wounded by shell fragments, was ordered to move into position for the attack at 1630. At 1530 Company L began to infiltrate, a few men at a time, through Company K. In the meantime word reached Companies I and L that the attack had been postponed to 1830. Presumably through an intercepted radio message, the enemy heard the news at the same time, for beginning exactly at 1830, from 300 to 400 artillery shells fell in the sector held by the 3d Battalion.

After the barrage had subsided somewhat, Company L moved up the southern slope of Hill 103 beyond Company K. Two platoons were abreast: the 3d Platoon on the left, the 2d on the right, each with two squads forward and one in support. For flank protection, the support squads of each platoon followed to the outside and rear. The 1st Platoon remained in reserve. The machine guns of the 4th Platoon remained along the slope near the road on the little knob between the Left Tit and Hill 103, and the light mortars were in the draw south of the little knob.

Advancing up the slope of Hill 103, the men from the 2d and 3d Platoons used two steep terraces for protection against machine-gun fire from the crest. As they reached the unterraced space toward the top, about 200 yards from the jump-off point, they began to be hit by heavy fire from a machine gun directly in front of the 2d Platoon. The troops were pinned down and most of them were wounded by the direct fire.

Crawling forward toward the dugout, Tech/Sgt. Floyd P. Loterbaugh, 2d Platoon sergeant, emptied his carbine at the position, then picked up a rifle from one of his wounded men and fired it until ammunition ran out. During this time the Germans in the dugout fired clip after clip at Sergeant Loterbaugh. When they had used up their entire stock, they ran out of the entrenchment in an attempt to escape. Seeing them break out of the dugout, Sergeant Loterbaugh snatched up an abandoned BAR and crawled forward where he could observe the fast-moving Germans. By accurate fire, he killed at least three of them.

Although Sergeant Loterbaugh had neutralized the troublesome position, the 2d Platoon was still unable to advance across the crest of Hill 103 because of heavy fire from




*MAP NO. 18*

other machine guns on the right and left flanks. The men stayed where they were and waited for the 1st Platoon to come up and join them. As darkness came on and the reinforcements did not show up, Sergeant Loterbaugh ordered his platoon, which had suffered many casualties, to withdraw to the lower part of the southern slope below the first terrace, just in front of the line where Company K was dug in.

On the left, the 3d Platoon had also been stopped near the crest, in the cross fire of automatic weapons. One of the machine guns was located in a house near the crest. Sizing up the situation, Pvts. Henry Dombrowski and Richard Zippel crawled forward toward the enemy gun. As they entered the building, two Germans fired on them with machine pistols, one of the shots wounding Zippel. Undaunted they both charged, killed the Germans with rifle fire, and put the machine gun out of action. Although this action removed one of the troublesome guns, the 3d Platoon found its situation on the bare crest untenable and withdrew at dark down the southern slope of Hill 103.

Company I's attempt to flank Hill 103 around the left was abortive. The heavy concentration of German artillery fire south of Hill 103 at jump-off time prevented the men from moving out as scheduled. Continuing for several hours, the barrage made it extremely hazardous to move. When the men did get going, machine-gun and mortar fire, some coming from Hill 103, but principally from the S-Ridge, forced Company I to abandon its advance for the night.

Enemy artillery fire, as well as the machine guns and mortars on Hill 103 and the S-Ridge, had caused many casualties in the 3d Battalion. Company K, which had received much of the artillery fire at its supporting position south of Hill 103, was down to one-half its original strength. Company I was at two-thirds strength and Company L had lost many men from its rifle platoons. Just before midnight Capt. Howard E. Miller, the 3d Battalion S–3, reported, "I just saw two years of training go up in smoke—my men—about half of them—almost all the leaders." Part of the failure of the 3d Bat-

talion attack was due to the slow progress on the left flank, where coordination troubles between the 1st Battalion and the 338th Infantry prevented the swift accomplishment of the vital mission of capturing the S-Ridge.

### *1st Battalion Gains at the S-Ridge*

The 2d and 3d Battalions had jumped off immediately to the front of their forward positions, but the 1st Battalion had to move a long distance forward from the center of Cemetery Ridge to be in position for its attack against the S-Ridge. Consequently the attack on the 351st Infantry's left wing got off to a much slower start than had been hoped for. Difficulties of coordination with the 338th Infantry, attacking the southernmost knob of the S-Ridge at a different time, also upset the 1st Battalion's attack. In addition, enemy fire separated the battalion commander from his unit before the jump-off and held up the troops before they reached their jump-off position (Map No. 19).

After receiving the regimental attack order at noon on 13 May, Maj. Harold McV. Brown, 1st Battalion commander, accompanied by the battalion S–3, artillery liaison officer, and heavy weapons company commander, left the battalion CP to reconnoiter his assigned objectives from Mt. Natale, westernmost hill on Cemetery Ridge. His executive officer, Capt. Trevor E. Williams, had assured Major Brown that the battalion would be ready to attack at 1630. In addition to choosing a suitable route of advance, Major Brown planned to coordinate tightly with the 338th Infantry, which was to attack Hill 131 at 1630. After Major Brown's group reached Mt. Natale, they were pinned down by artillery fire. Capt. Herbert D. Shoemaker, the heavy weapons company commander, was killed, and the battalion commander was not able to return to his troops for several hours.

Because of the urgency of the 1st Battalion's mission, Colonel Champeny decided that Captain Williams should lead the attack on schedule without Major Brown. After briefing the company commanders on their mission Captain Williams moved the 1st Battalion out of the assembly area on Cemetery Ridge and down the Minturno–Santa Maria road in a column of companies: C, B, Headquarters, A, and D. As the troops reached the road, tanks passed near them. Coming under the heavy shell fire directed by the enemy at our tanks, the troops of the 1st Battalion suffered some casualties.

After turning off the road, the 1st Battalion waded in a single column through the knee-deep mud and water of the creek bed that lay in the narrow valley between the S-Ridge and the Minturno–Santa Maria road. Companies C and B reached the jump-off point at the base of Hill 109 without incident, but somewhere along the way they lost contact with Company A and the two machine-gun platoons of Company D which had been following them. This rear group wandered to Mt. Natale before 1st Lt. George D. Schaffer, 1st Battalion S–3, found it and led it back to the forward elements of the battalion. Slowed up by the uncertain footing and the burden of carrying heavy machine guns, the troops of the 1st Battalion moved at such a snail's pace that they could not jump off at the scheduled time, and the

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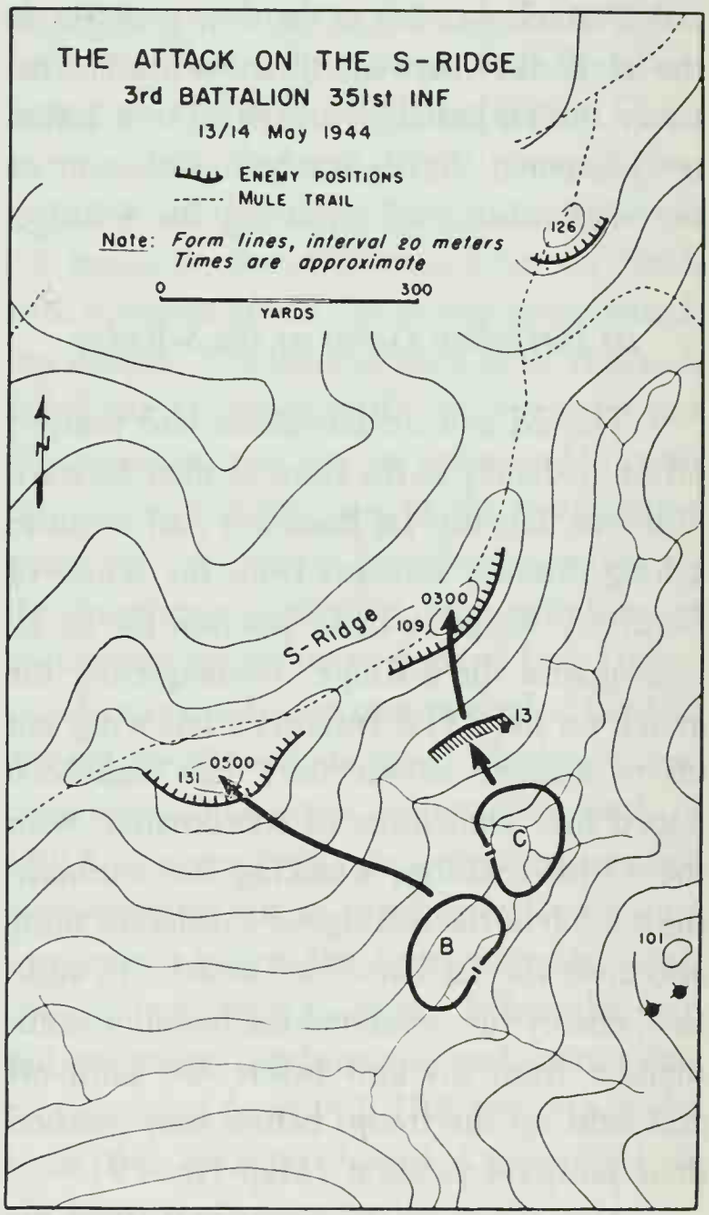
attack was postponed to 1830. Word had also been received from the battalion commander to delay the attack until he arrived. It was already dark before Major Brown, accompanied by Colonel Champeny, reached the battalion CP in the creek bed east of the S-Ridge. Upon arriving, the battalion commander made a brief reconnaissance, issued attack orders to his company commanders, and gave them a chance to make their own reconnaissance.

Under Major Brown's plan of attack, Company C was to move from the jump-off point in the creek bed straight up Hill 109 to take it by frontal assault. After the 338th Infantry captured Hill 131, Company A would pass through Company C and attack along a mule trail on the S-Ridge crest against knobs 126 and 128 at the northeastern extremity of the S-Ridge. Company B would remain in the creek bed, in reserve. All night the machine-gun platoon of Company D stayed there too, while the heavy mortars were in position behind Hill 101. During the 1st Battalion's attack neither the heavy machine guns nor the 81-mm mortars were fired because, like the lighter weapons of Companies B and C, they could be used only at the risk of inflicting casualties among our own attacking troops.

Company C's objective, Hill 109, like Hill 131 under attack by the 338th Infantry just to the south, was terraced on the upper half of the southeastern slope. The slightly flattened crest of Hill 109 was about 70 yards wide and 300 yards long. Along the southeastern edge lay a minefield and behind it concertina barbed wire. Covering the minefield and the wire were two machine guns




*MAP NO. 19*

emplaced in earthen dugouts. About 50 yards below the concertina wire the terraces began, rising in tiers to the crest. In attacking this difficult objective Company C was hindered by ignorance of the progress of 338th Infantry troops against Hill 131, farther south on the ridge. The 338th had jumped off at 1630, about six and a half hours before Company C was ready to go against Hill 109.

A ten-minute artillery concentration on Hill 109 preceded Company C's jump-off.

After firing only a few rounds, the artillery received a report that its shells were falling on 338th Infantry troops, who, unknown to the 351st Infantry, had dug in about halfway up the southeastern slope of Hill 109. When the artillery barrage lifted at about 2200, Company C moved out from the creek bed in single file, one platoon behind the other. The moon had not yet come up and the hill was shrouded in darkness. A man could see barely ten yards ahead of him unless his eyes focused on outlined objects or figures. After climbing out of the creek bed, Company C advanced up the slope of Hill 109 with the 3d and 2d Platoons abreast, the 3d Platoon on the right. The two platoons were about 15 yards apart in a formation of two squads abreast and forward and one in support. The 1st Platoon, in reserve, followed the leading platoons at a connecting distance until it reached a point about 100 yards up the slope, where it dug in and waited for the go-ahead signal.

The Weapons Platoon followed the rifle platoons up the slope of Hill 109 about 50 yards from the creek bed and there emplaced its machine guns and mortars. Six .50-cal. machine guns of the 1st Battalion's Antitank Platoon set up in the creek bed to support Company C, and later moved to the draw at the foot of Hill 109, 25 yards beyond the creek. Because of intervening terraces, however, our machine guns could not bring effective fire on the German positions along the crest of Hill 109. Also, the close-in nature of the fighting for the hill made it difficult for mortars and machine guns to fire on the enemy without at the same time risking casualties among the riflemen of Company C. Therefore no supporting fire was used during the attack.

Once out of the creek bed, the leading platoons of Company C raced up the hill. Halfway up the slope, the two leading squads of the 3d Platoon on the right saw 15 to 20 men rush out of house No. 13, a few yards away. Thinking that the men were Germans, the 3d Platoon fired, wounding several of them. The rest hastened to identify themselves as troops of the 338th Infantry. These men explained that, after clearing out enemy resistance on the crest of 109 (they evidently mistook this knob for their objective, 131), they had returned halfway down the hill and dug in around the building to set up a rear-slope defense against counterattacks. At the time the 3d Platoon arrived, the men from the 338th Infantry had been in position for two hours. Communication failure prevented the 3d Platoon from knowing that friendly troops were on 109. During the course of this exchange of information, 1st Lt. Garvin C. McMakin, the company commander, came up and ordered the 3d Platoon and the 2d Platoon to dig in. But the 2d Platoon was not in contact.

On the left, the 2d Platoon of Company C had moved forward on the run until it reached the steepest part of the slope, and then changed to a fast walk. During the advance three machine guns fired from the crest of the ridge over the heads of the 2d Platoon, which was protected from fire by terraces that ringed the upper half of the slope. One machine gun was in a dugout on the left in the saddle between Hills 109 and 131, the other two were on the crest of Hill 109. Between them they established interlocking

bands of fire which covered the approaches to the crest. Coming up against a strand of concertina wire about 15–20 yards from the crest, Tech/Sgt. Joseph W. Adams, platoon sergeant, pulled his men back about 10 yards, deployed them in a skirmish line with the 3d Squad 5 yards to the right of the 2d squad, and directed them to dig in.

Before jumping off the 2d Platoon had been instructed by Lieutenant McMakin that, after reaching the crest, it would contact the 3d Platoon. Accordingly, when the 2d Platoon reached the concertina wire, the two scouts of the 3d Squad, Pfc. Phillips Soto and Pfc. Daniel B. Van Wickler, were sent over to the right to make contact with the 3d Platoon. They crawled over the ground for 50 yards until they found themselves under the very nose of the enemy machine gunners. Fortunately the two scouts were not detected. They searched for the 3d Platoon, but seeing no trace of it crawled back to the point where the rest of their platoon were digging in.

The Germans on the crest evidently heard the 2d Platoon digging in, because they threw flares at them and pulled an igniter which set off antipersonnel mines in the area. At the same time an enemy machine gun concealed in an earthen dugout covered with chicken wire began firing at them. Five men in the 2d Platoon were wounded or killed by the machine gun; three more fell victim to the mines. At that time the 3d Squad of the platoon was in support about 200 yards down the slope of Hill 109.

Soon after the machine gun opened fire and the mines went off, a runner from Lieutenant McMakin worked his way up to the terrace behind the 2d Platoon and called out for Sergeant Adams to pull his men down the slope abreast of the 3d Platoon. The 2d Platoon, minus the supporting squad which was below on the slope, then crawled down over the terrace. Protected from machine-gun fire by this and the other terraces near the crest, the 2d Platoon walked halfway down the slope of Hill 109. After the 2d Platoon had withdrawn down the hill, Germans on the crest continued to pour searching machine-gun fire over the heads of the men and to throw flares to spot them.

When word reached Lieutenant McMakin of the casualties suffered by the 2d Platoon, he promptly called up the 1st Platoon which was still in its reserve positions. While waiting for it to arrive, 1st Lt. Donald S. Rocke, executive officer of Company C, decided that the weapon which had been firing from the crest of Hill 109 was an American light machine gun and that it was probably manned by elements of the 338th Infantry who did not know our troops were on the southeastern slope. Contrary to advice from the other officers and from Sergeant Adams that the American-sounding machine gun was manned by Germans, Lieutenant Rocke went up the hill by himself to stop it from firing. He started off walking but, as he came closer to his objective, broke into a run. As he approached the machine gun he called out: "Identify yourself or we will throw the kitchen sink at you!" The Germans in the dugout allowed Lieutenant Rocke to get within ten yards before they opened fire and killed him.

Hearing the machine gun open up at Lieutenant Rocke and suspecting what had

happened, Lieutenant McMakin led Company C forward from its position midway up the slope. In this attack two platoons were abreast and about 40 yards apart, with the 3d on the left and the 1st Platoon on the right. The 2d Platoon, which had suffered the heaviest casualties, had dropped back into reserve.

All the way up the hill rifle grenadiers of the 1st and 3d Platoons fired grenades at the German machine-gun positions. About 60 yards from the crest the riflemen also opened up, and the Germans replied with hand grenades and machine-gun fire. Unable to see their targets, the men of Company C directed area fire at the crest. Just before reaching the crest Lieutenant McMakin knocked out the machine gun on the right side of the crest. When Company C reached the top of Hill 109, the other machine guns ceased firing and between 0300 and 0400 the enemy withdrew down the northwest slope. Heavy artillery and mortar fire then began to fall on the crest. Outposting the tip of the hill with BAR men and one squad from each of the 1st and 3d Platoons, Lieutenant McMakin withdrew the remainder of the company down the southeastern slope, where they dug in and remained throughout the night.

Shortly before Company C jumped off, machine-gun fire began coming from Hill 131, objective of the 338th Infantry. After continuing to receive this fire, Major Brown decided that Germans still held the position and sent Company B up to silence the unexpected opposition. Before tackling the job, Capt. David R. Jones, commanding Company B, asked for a little more time so that he could get artillery fire placed on Hill 131. At about 0400, when it was still dark, Captain Jones led Company B up the northeast slope of Hill 131, two platoons abreast and in squad column. The right assault platoon went up the nose of the slope; the other platoon advanced 75 yards to the left. Though not used during Company B's advance up Hill 131, the mortars and machine guns were held ready in the draw on call. Shortly after the jump-off, Company B received some machine-gun fire, but it soon ceased. Apparently the Germans abandoned their positions on the crest, and with no more interference Company B marched straight up the hill. At the crest it struck a minefield which was surrounded by concertina wire and had been covered by a German machine gun. Although the mines killed or wounded several men, Company B's total casualties in the attack were comparatively small: five killed and seven wounded. At daybreak Company B moved back down to the creek bed, having been relieved by elements of the 338th Infantry.

Hills 131 and 109 were now securely in the hands of the 338th and 351st Infantry, but these points were the only objectives which had been taken during the costly 13 May attack. The 351st Infantry's carefully planned assault had been thrown off by several unforeseen circumstances: the slow approach of the 1st Battalion to its jump-off point; the delay in its commander's return from his reconnaissance which made postponement necessary; the failure of this information to get through in time to Companies E and G; and the enemy's heavy artillery barrage near Hill 103.

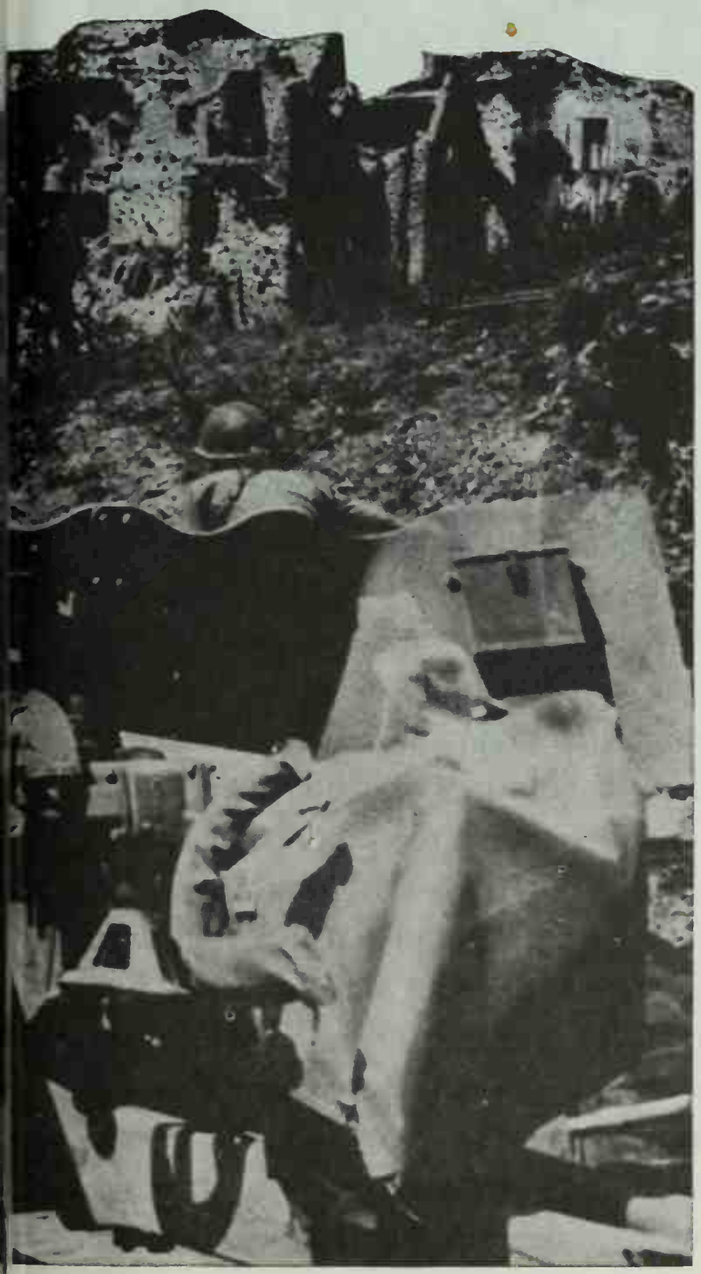
### *Capture of Santa Maria Infante (14 May)*

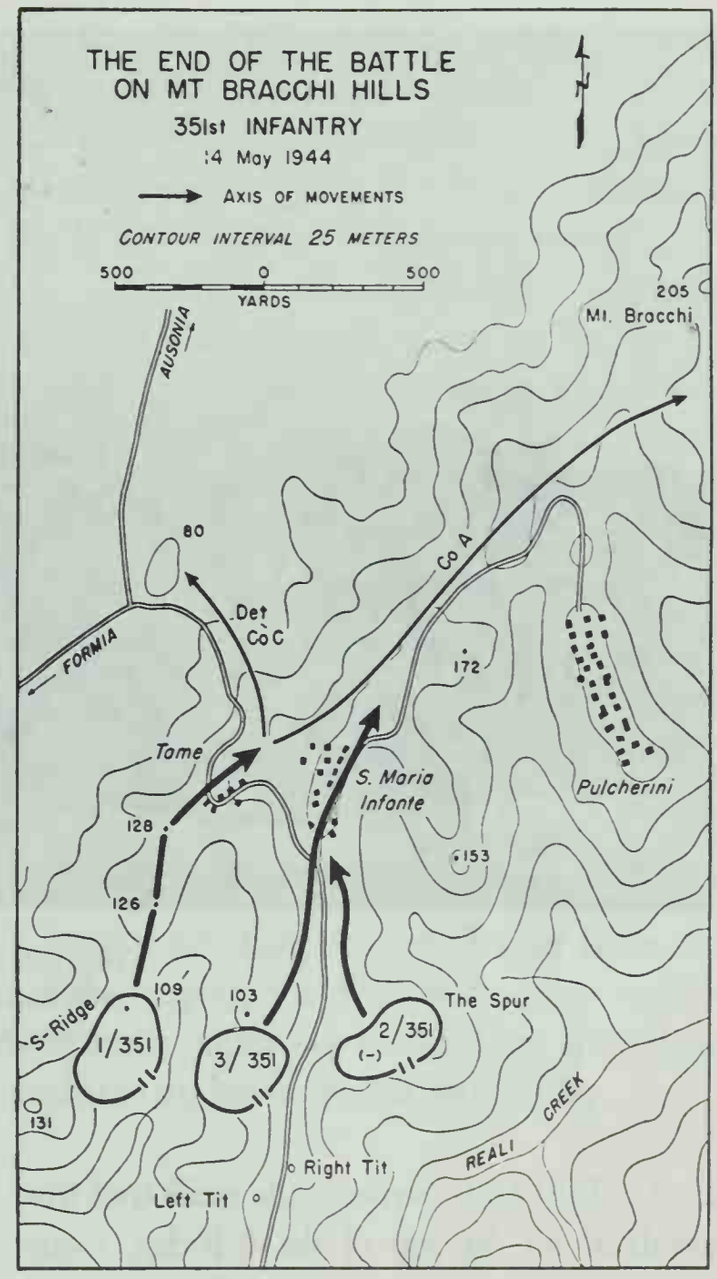
Two and a half days of bitter fighting had apparently not yielded more than a few enemy strongpoints to the depleted battalions of the 351st Infantry. The 2d Battalion was still dug in on The Spur and the 3d had reorganized at the base of Hill 103. Both units were ready to renew the effort, and on Hill 109, its hard-won objective on the S-Ridge, the 1st Battalion prepared to push north again on 14 May (Map No. 20).

At 0800 the 3d Battalion attacked from Hill 103 toward Santa Maria along the west slope of the road, with Company I on the left and Company L on the right. Before entering the town, Company L was diverted to the right at the order of Major Furr to avoid the minefields on the left side of the

SANTA MARIA INFANTE *was entered on 14 May. The small hill town had been demolished by air and artillery bombardments.*

road west of the Y-junction. Company I swung around and cleared out the houses in the western part of Santa Maria, where the enemy had posted a suicide group of snipers. Company L meanwhile crossed the road and cleared the houses on the right side of the town, killing and capturing a handful of riflemen. The two companies reached the town about 0900 and spent a couple of hours mopping up last pockets of enemy resistance. The

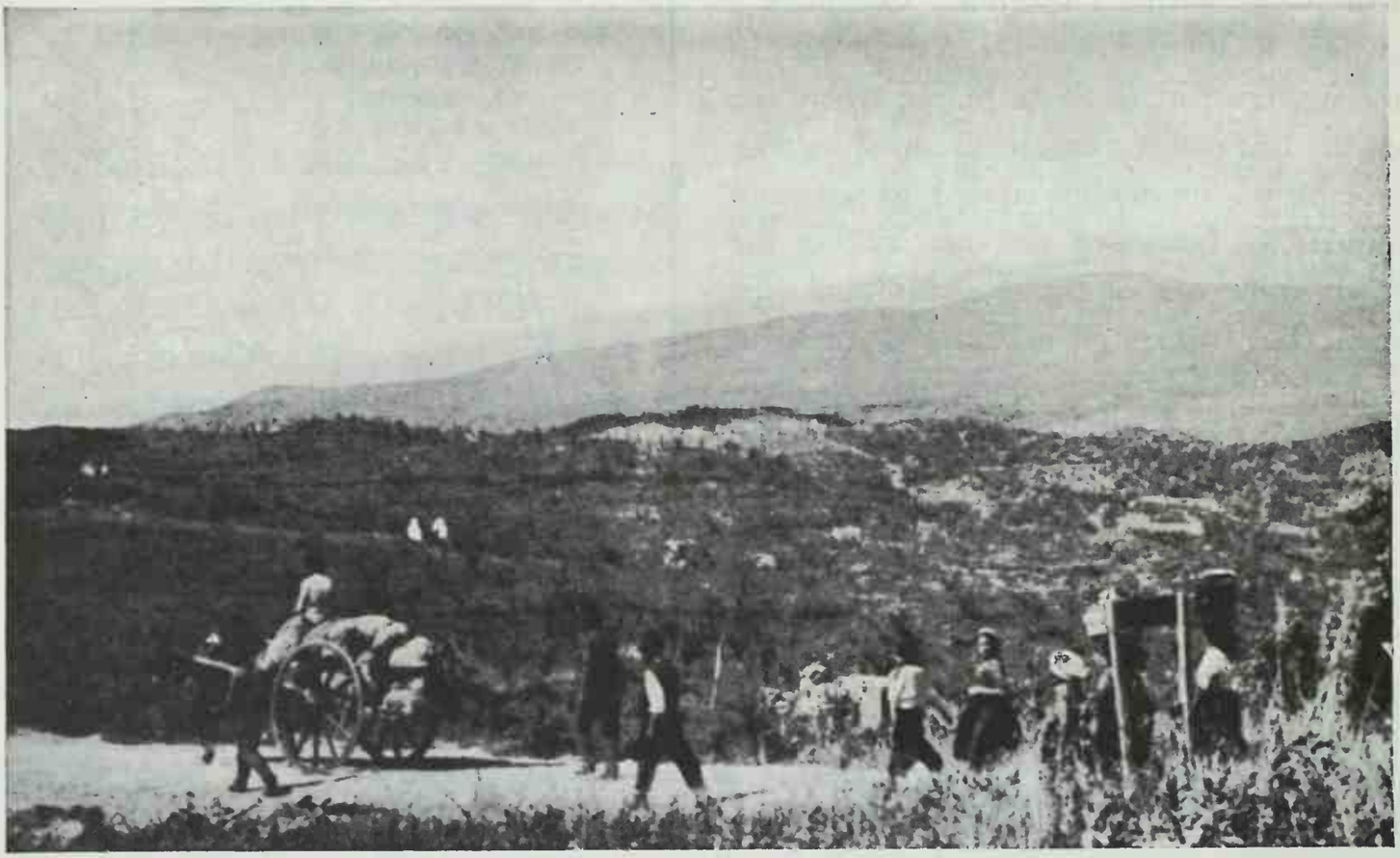





*MAP NO. 20*

2d Battalion followed the 3d Battalion into Santa Maria; the enemy had also withdrawn from his excellent positions on The Spur.

Enemy defense weaker than the resistance of previous days, the northern half of S-Ridge was captured by the 1st Battalion. At 0800 Company A, commanded by Capt. John C. Reid, moved out of the creek bed below the S-Ridge and passed through Company C, which was on the southeast slope and



RETURNING TO RUINED HOMES, *a month after the battle, these Italian peasants are photographed in a characteristic scene. They are on the ridge road, moving south toward town of Minturno.*

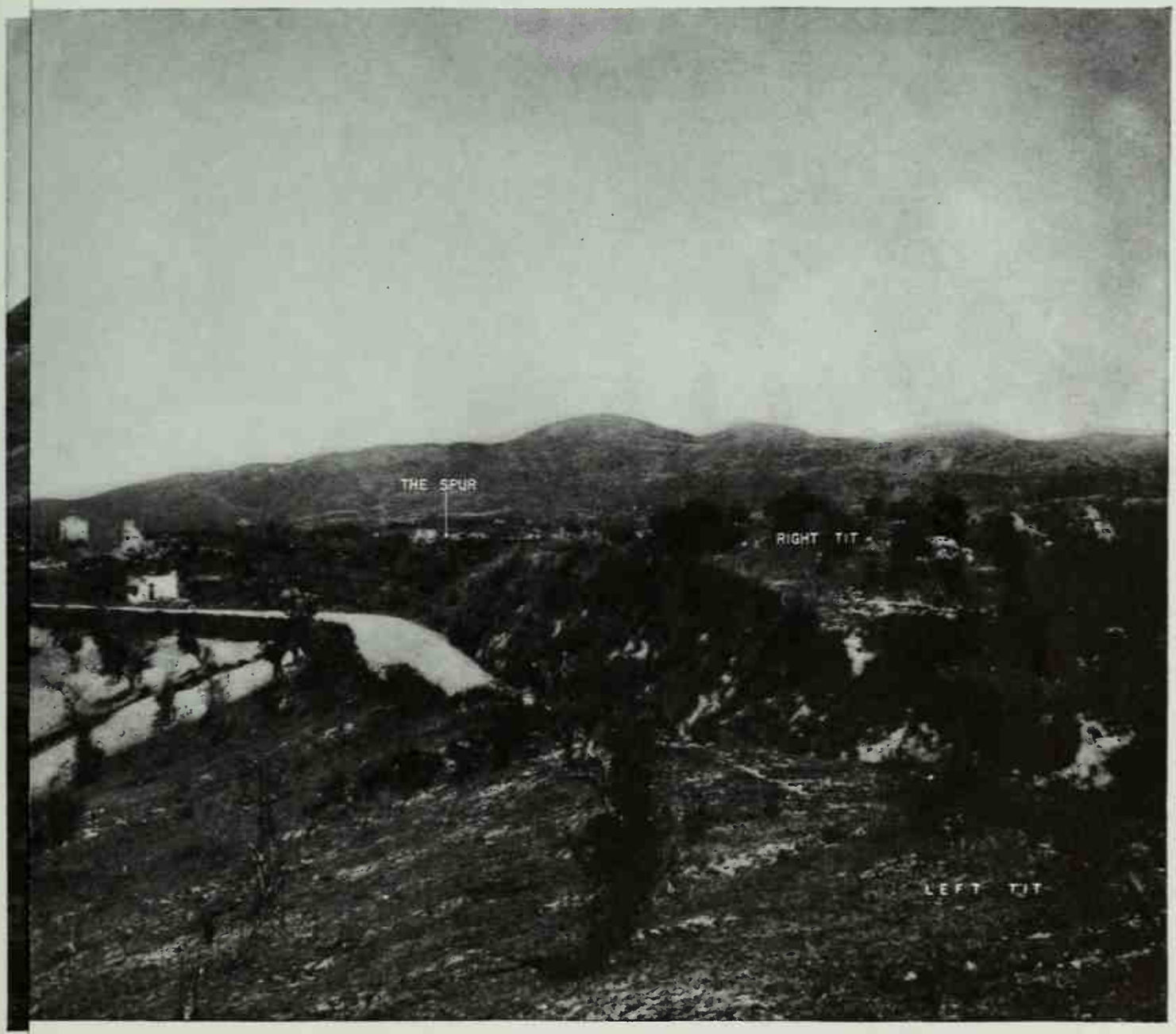
crest of Hill 109. Striking the mule trail that winds along the top of the S-Ridge, Company A went along it to Hill 126, following the fire of the 913th Field Artillery Battalion at the close-in distance of 50 yards. No resistance was met. A few Germans were discovered in a dugout on Hill 126. They refused to come out of their hiding place, and, when words failed, Company A threw grenades into the dugout, killing several of the enemy. The others surrendered. There was no resistance on Hill 128 and Company A pushed on to Mt. Bracchi, while Company B and Company C moved up and occupied Hills 126, 128, and Tame. Company C sent a contingent to Hill 80 to gain control of the junction of the Santa Maria–Tame road with the Ausonia–Formia highway.

Thus, on 14 May, the 351st reached its objectives in a way that seemed an anticlimax after the earlier efforts. The *71st Infantry Division,* exhausted by three days of battle in which it lost upwards of 5,000 men, found itself unable to check the progress of French units in the Castelforte–Mt. Majo sector. Because of the terrain lost in that area, the whole German line to the coast was threatened. On 13 May, *XIV Panzer Corps* ordered a withdrawal to a new defense line anchored on the Aurunci Mountains. According to reports from captured Germans, what was left of the force in the Pulcherini–Santa Maria–S-Ridge

sector retreated north the next morning, between 0130 and 0230, to Spigno over the mule trails that run into the Ausonia–Spigno road. Only a small rear-guard force of snipers was left to cover the retreat.

The 351st Infantry could be proud of its record in the three-day battle for Santa Maria Infante. The attack was the first offensive action undertaken by the regiments of the 88th Division, first American draft division to go into combat. Veteran units could not have shown a more aggressive spirit against the extremely difficult, well-placed enemy positions covering the hills and approaches to the regimental objective. The 351st suffered over 500 casualties in the three days. On 12 and 13 May, the only days during the battle on which an accurate breakdown of losses can be made, 84 men were killed, 284 wounded, and 93 missing—a total of 461 casualties. On the morning of 14 May the effective strength of the 2d and 3d Battalions' rifle companies, each of which had started with 170 men, was as follows: Company E, 90; Company G, 86; Company I, 74; Company K, 68; and Company L, 118. Company F no longer existed.

The efforts of the 351st Infantry against some of the strongest positions in the II Corps sector contributed greatly to the success of the first phase of Fifth Army's drive to Rome. The constant pressure of the infantry attacks in the Bracchi triangle, and the threat to the enemy's lateral supply route by the 339th Infantry's capture (13 May) of San Martino Hill, which commanded the Spigno road junction, had prevented the enemy from shifting any troops to meet the French drive through the rugged country farther north. Holding Mt. dei Bracchi, II Corps guarded the Ausonia Valley from the south, helping the French to push swiftly across the valley on 14–15 May after their brilliant success in the Mt. Majo hills.

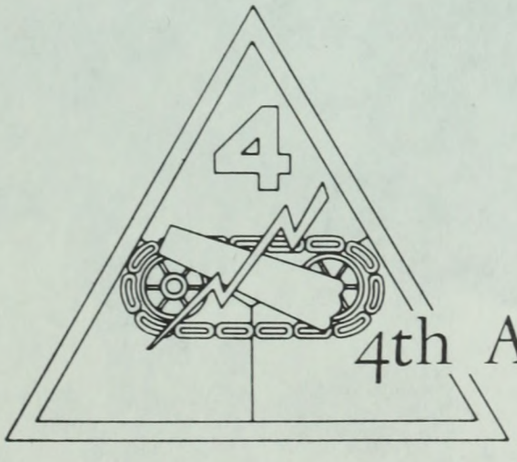



PANORAMA

(Face p. 174)

SMALL UNIT ACTIONS

# *SINGLING*




4th ARMORED DIVISION

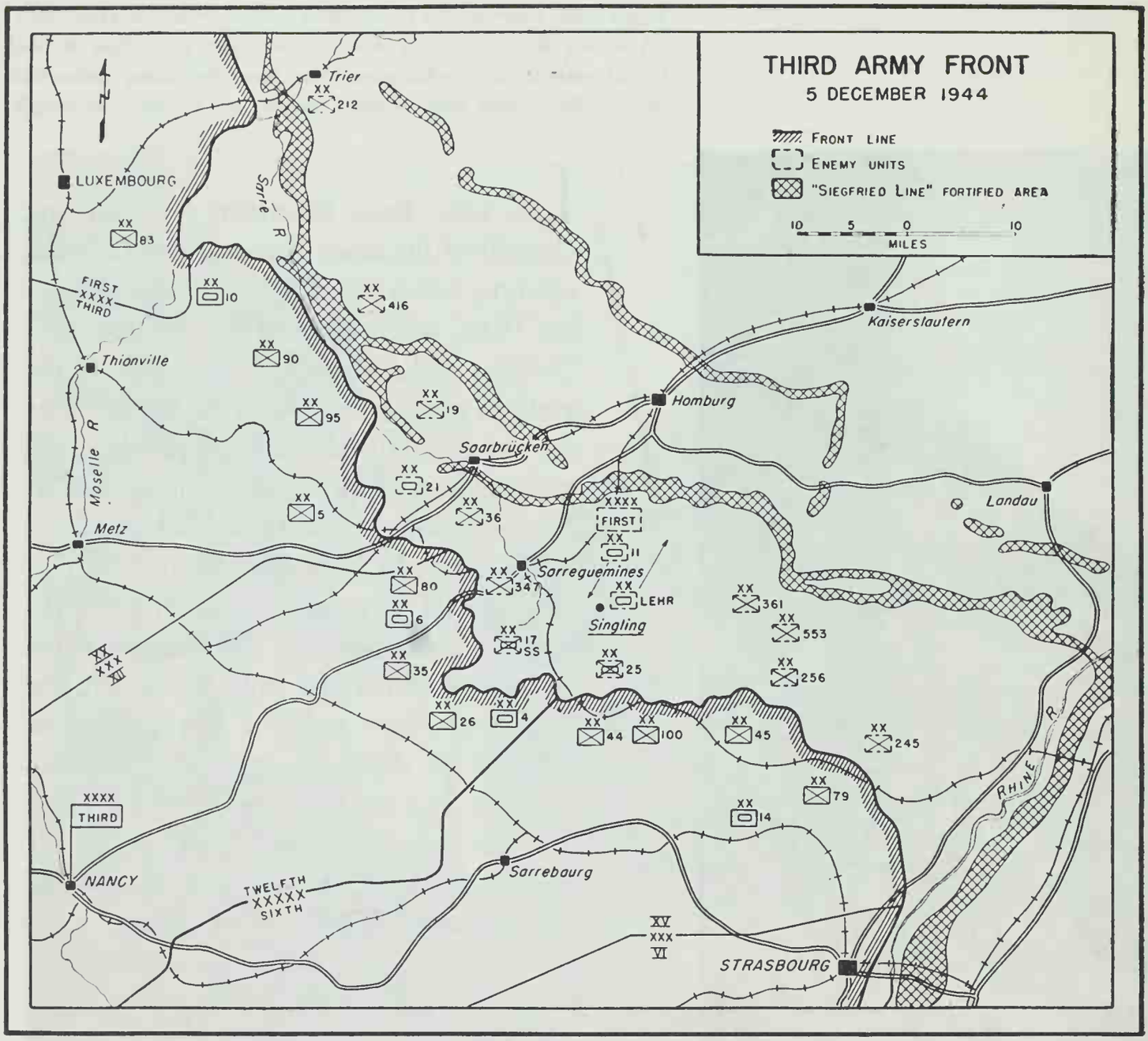
6 December 1944

CHURCH AT SINGLING, *looking east up the main street which was in ankle-deep mud when picture was taken. (All photos for this action, unless otherwise stated, were taken 12 December 1944.) Figure in center is the combat historian who studied this action.*

Lt. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, Commanding General of the crack *Panzer Lehr Division,* was on a hill north of Singling on 6 December 1944, when tanks of the 4th Armored Division broke across the open hills to the south in a frontal attack on the town. After the war ended he remembered that sight and spoke of it with professional enthusiasm as "an outstanding tank attack, such as I have rarely seen, over ideal tank terrain."

General Bayerlein could afford a detached appreciation. At the moment when he saw the American tanks in motion, the attack was not his problem. His division, after ten costly days of trying to drive south to cut off the rear of advancing American forces, had just been withdrawn, relieved by the *11th Panzer Division.* Bayerlein himself had remained behind only because some of his tank destroyer units had been attached temporarily to the relieving forces.

The attacks on Singling and Bining which General Bayerlein so admired were the last actions in Lorraine of the 4th Armored Division commanded (after 3 December) by Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey. For nearly a month the division had been fighting in the most difficult terrain and under the most trying weather conditions of its entire campaign in France. Casualties in men and materiel had been very heavy, largely because constant rains prevented air cover and because swampy ground either confined the tanks to the roads or so reduced




*MAP NO. 1*

their maneuverability in cross-country attack that they fell an easy prey to the enemy's prepared defenses.

Throughout the Lorraine campaign the division practice was to operate in small, flexible task forces (generally two to a combat command) which themselves were constantly broken up into smaller forces of company strength of tanks or infantry or both. These smaller "teams" were generally formed at need by the task force commander to deal with a strongpoint of enemy resistance which was holding up the advance of the main body, or to clean out a village or hold high ground to safeguard such advance. In this sense, the attack on Singling, though inconclusive, was typical of the campaign tactics. It shows some of the difficulties of the use of armor in terrain which naturally favored the defense, and which the Germans

knew thoroughly and had ample time to fortify. In respect to weather, however, which all the tankers said was their toughest and most memorable enemy during the campaign, Singling was not typical. The day of the battle was overcast, but there was no rain. Mud, except during the assembling stage, had no influence on the course of the action.

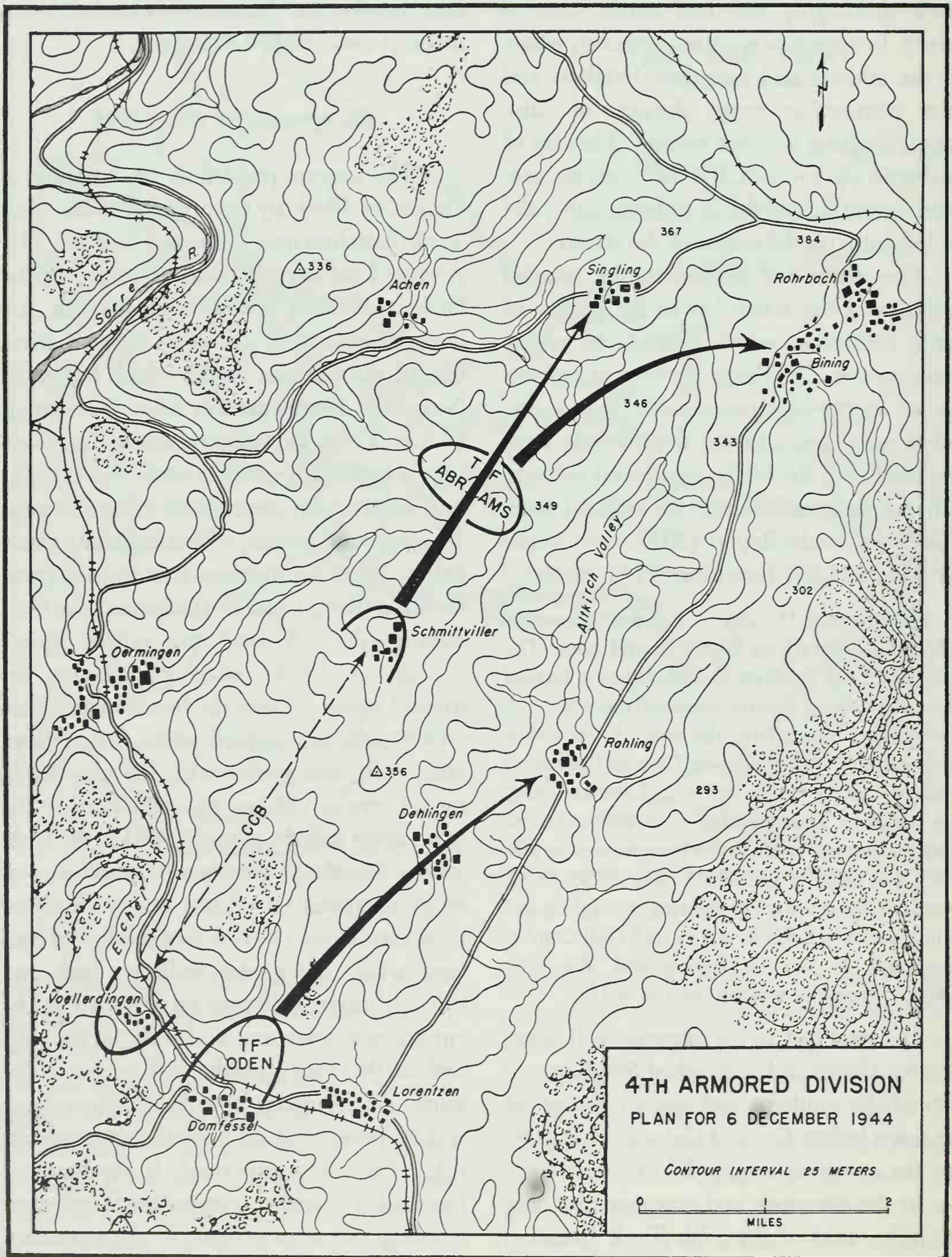
One feature of interest in the detailed narrative of the action lies in the picture of battle confusion, which extends to higher headquarters. At Corps nothing at all was known of the engagement described in the following pages, and the day's events were represented to the higher command substantially as the realization of the original plan. The G–3 Periodic Report (XII Corps) Number 115, 071200 December 1944, reads:

> 4th Armored Division — Combat Command A began their attack on Bining around noon. The 38th (sic) Tank Battalion and 53d Infantry formed a base of fire to the south of town and the 37th Tank Battalion hit Bining from the west. As the attack on Bining (Q6549) progressed, Combat Command B passed Combat Command A and attacked Singling (Q6249). The opposition here consisted of infantry, tanks, and antitank fire from numerous pillboxes, and artillery fire which came in 30- to 40-round concentrations. The fighting at Singling and Bining was very difficult, but by night fall Combat Command A was in Bining and Rohrbach (Q6549). Singling was not clear as of 1730. . . .

In actual fact, as the narrative will show, Combat Command A attacked Singling and secured the southern and eastern portion of the town before Combat Command B came up; the attack on Bining did not begin until late in the afternoon and was made by only the light tanks of the 37th Tank Battalion supporting a battalion of the 328th Infantry; and, finally, no elements of Combat Command A ever reached Rohrbach.

### *Background of the Attack*

The impromptu attack on Singling, 6 December 1944, by Company B of the 37th Tank Battalion and Company B of the 51st Armored Infantry Battalion represented the farthest advance northeast of the 4th Armored Division in its slow, difficult drive toward the German border which began 10 November from assembly areas just east of Nancy. From the military standpoint, Singling is important not as a town but as a terrain feature. An agricultural village of some 50 squat stone houses, it is strung along about half a mile of the highway from Achen (near the Sarre River) east to Bitche and the German border. Around the simple square church, the brown stone schoolhouse, the market square, cluster the houses whose concreted walls are painted white, red, yellow, blue, pink, and roofed with red tile. As in most Lorraine villages, the stables are on the main street and the manure piled in the front yards. But the picturesque insignificance of Singling conceals a military reality. Some of these farm houses have 3-foot reinforced concrete walls; the garden walls are high and thick; concrete pillboxes stand guard at the entrances to town east and west, on the hills and in the valley north, and on the ridge south. For Singling is in the Maginot Line, and its position along a southwest-northeast ridge is tactically important. In the Maginot fortification scheme, oriented north and east, Singling was a focal point in the secondary system of forts. For the Germans defending


Sarre R.
△336
Achen
Singling
367
384
Rohrboch
Bining
346
343
TF ABRAMS
349
Schmittviller
Alikirch Valley
302
Oermingen
Rohling
△356
293
Dehlingen
CCB
Eichel R.
Voellerdingen
TF ODEN
Lorentzen
Domfessel
4TH ARMORED DIVISION
PLAN FOR 6 DECEMBER 1944
CONTOUR INTERVAL 25 METERS
0
1
2
MILES

*MAP NO. 2*

south and west, it was admirably placed as a fortified outpost for the defense against attack from the southwest toward the cities of Rohrbach, an important rail and road center and military barracks area, and Bining, which controls the approaches to Rohrbach from the south.

Rohrbach and Bining, both located in the valleys dominated on three sides by high ground, are themselves tactical liabilities. But control of the cities through occupation of the ridge to the north was especially important at this time both to XII Corps, which ordered the attack, and to Seventh Army (XV Corps), which was on the 4th Armored Division's right flank (Map No. 1, page 178). The principal objective of the XII Corps was Sarreguemines, an important city on the Sarre River and the German border. Through Rohrbach pass a railroad and one of the main highways east out of Sarreguemines to Germany. The 4th Armored Division was to seize this escape route while the 35th Infantry Division attacked Sarreguemines. Rohrbach had an additional importance as an objective at the time, because it was a focus for roads north out of the large forest area (including the Forêt-de-Lemberg and Forêt-de-Montbronn) then under attack by XV Corps units.

But Rohrbach as an objective could not be separated from Singling (Map No. 2, opposite, and Map No. 3, 184). The main road into Rohrbach from the south follows high ground, but passes by a series of small knobs which makes it unusable for attack. The alternative is the ridge west of the Vallée d'Altkirch. The east slopes of this ridge are, of course, enfiladed by the same hills that control the Rohrbach road. The west side, on the other hand, comes under direct frontal fire from Singling, which, by reason of a few feet additional elevation, and its position on the curving nose of the ridge, commands this approach route for three or four kilometers to the south. Neither route, therefore, was satisfactory, since tanks on both would come under enemy observation before they were within range to attack, but the west side of the ridge with comparative freedom from flanking fire seemed to offer the best hope for success. To use it for attacking Bining, however, it was first necessary either to take or to neutralize Singling. The ridge configuration and the impassability of flooded terrain in the Vallée d'Altkirch compelled the attacking force to come up east of Singling and then make a ninety-degree turn southeast on the high ground into Bining. Assault of Singling was rendered difficult not only by the canalized approach but also by the fact that the heights it occupies are themselves dominated by a ridge 1,200 yards to the north which is in the main defenses of the Maginot Line.

Just how difficult the task was had been discovered on 5 December by the 37th Tank Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Creighton W. Abrams, when it attacked from Schmittviller under orders to advance as far as possible, with Rimling as a limiting objective. In fact, the attack carried only to within 1,000 yards of Singling and was there stopped by difficult terrain and by heavy artillery and direct fire from Singling and beyond. Fourteen medium tanks were lost to mud and enemy guns. Five were hit almost simultaneously on topping a ridge south of

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town; others bogged in the sticky ground and were destroyed by artillery or temporarily disabled. The battalion, reduced in effective strength to two medium companies and unable to advance, reassembled northwest of Hill 349. That night (5/6 December), Combat Command A Headquarters received from Division the plan of attack for the next day. Combat Command B was to advance from Schmittviller to take Singling and the high ground to the east. Task Force Abrams (of Combat Command A), whose principal combat elements were the 37th Tank Battalion, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm howitzers), and Company B of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less one platoon), was to attack Bining and Rohrbach and reconnoiter the high ground to the north. Task Force Oden (of Combat Command A) meanwhile would push on from the Eichel River bridgehead at Domfessel to take Dehlingen and Rahling, and be in a position to support Abrams (Map No. 2, page 180).

AERIAL VIEW OF SINGLING; *photo taken 10 September 1944*

Colonel Abrams recommended to Combat Command A that he be allowed to attack Singling first. Combat Command B was still in the vicinity of Voellerdingen and Schmittviller, and, though they could march as far as Abrams' assembly area without opposition, he knew that they would be unable to come up in time to jump off abreast with Combat Command A in the attack. This would mean that Abrams would have to turn his flank to Singling in attacking east. If that turning had to be made, he asked Combat Command A for the support of at least six battalions of artillery. (In fact, when he attacked the next morning, all artillery battalions except the 94th were, unknown to him, on the road.) Abrams sent his recommendations as to objectives and artillery support to Combat Command A by liaison officer, along with a plan for attack on Bining if his preferred plan was not accepted.

But Colonel Abrams heard nothing further from Combat Command A, and assumed that they desired the original scheme of attack carried out, as ordered.

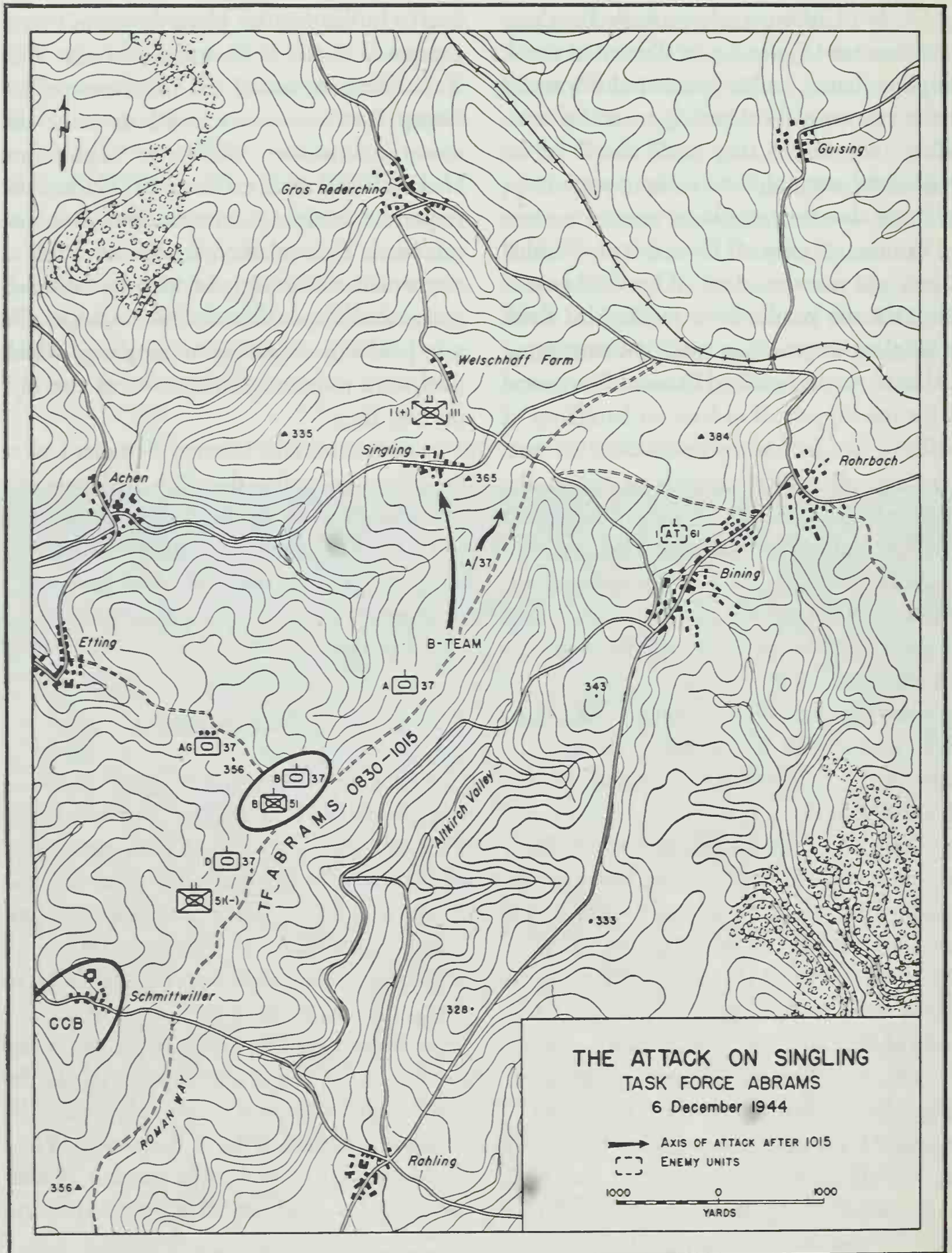
This called for advance north to the high ground south of Singling, then east to the trail fork and along the axis of the main road into Bining (shown on Map No. 3, page 184). Like-lettered infantry and tank companies were to be paired off, the two platoons of tank destroyers to be used for direct fire support. The turning movement south of Singling, compelled by the terrain, was to be covered not only by the artillery fire but by the assault guns and mortars of the 37th Tank Battalion, firing smoke and HE into the town and adjacent high ground from positions near Hill 356 (southwest of Singling). In the detailed plan, the assault team composed of the B Companies of the 37th Tank Battalion and of the 51st Armored Infantry Battalion was selected to make the sweep into the town of Bining. Capt. James H. Leach and 1st Lt. Daniel M. Belden, the respective company commanders, therefore met with their platoon leaders to study a town plan of Bining and map out detailed routes and dispositions for their troops. No one paid any attention to Singling, which they were to bypass under cover of the supporting fires.

Both tank and infantry battalions were far below strength; the 37th had only the equivalent of two medium tank companies; the 51st had about 180 combat effectives. Team B had 14 tanks, of which one was a Headquarters 105 assault gun attached,[1] and 57 infantrymen.

### *A Change in Plan*

The 51st Armored Infantry Battalion commanded by Maj. Dan C. Alanis, at 0700, 6 December, left bivouac areas in the vicinity of Schmittviller to meet the tanks for the jump-off at 0800. The plan, as far as it concerned Team B, was to advance in column of alternating tanks and infantry carriers up to the outskirts of Bining. But the soaked ground even on the hills proved too sticky for the half-tracks, and they were left in the bivouac area with their drivers while the riflemen rode the rear decks of the tanks. When they mounted at 0835 (Lieutenant Belden looked at his watch and was worried because

[1] An M-4 tank mounting a 105-mm howitzer instead of a 75- or 76.2-mm gun.


Guising
Gros Rederching
Welschhoff Farm
Singling
Achen
Rohrbach
Bining
Etting
B-TEAM
A/37
TF ABRAMS 0830-1015
Altkirch Valley
Schmittwiller
CCB
ROMAN WAY
Rahling
335
365
384
343
333
328
356
THE ATTACK ON SINGLING
TASK FORCE ABRAMS
6 December 1944
AXIS OF ATTACK AFTER 1015
ENEMY UNITS
1000 0 1000
YARDS

*MAP NO. 3*

they were late in starting), the plan still called for Team B to attack Bining. They were then just west of the Roman Way, still in the immediate vicinity of the battalion assembly area, 3,000 yards from Singling. Company A of the 37th Tank Battalion at the head of the column was a mile to the north, and had been stopped by direct and indirect fire from Singling as heavy as that of the day before. At 0830, Batteries B and C of the 94th Armored Field Artillery Battalion began firing smoke concentrations north and east of Singling. On 6 contiguous target areas they fired 131 rounds, but, although a gentle southwesterly breeze drifted the smoke perfectly across Singling, enemy fire continued heavy, and for the next hour or so the column made no attempt to advance. Company A, 37th Tank Battalion fired into the town, although targets were seldom visible. Company B of the same battalion shot occasionally at targets of opportunity at extreme range and without observed effect. Of the enemy ahead in Singling, Company B observed two tanks in the orchards west and east and a gun firing from the center of town. This turned out to be a self-propelled gun which later engaged the attention of the assaulting companies most of the day.

Convinced that enemy guns in Singling could not be neutralized by a fire fight, Colonel Abrams decided on his own initiative to attack the town and attempt to hold it with one tank company and infantry, while the remainder of his force turned east into Bining. He assigned the mission of taking the town to Team B (Map No. 3, opposite), which had no time to make detailed plans.

Captain Leach was given the order to attack; he informed Lieutenant Belden but, as the infantry was already mounted, Lieutenant Belden could not pass the word on even to his platoon leaders. (One of them thought until that night that he had been in Bining. The tank commanders were so sure of it that they mistook Welschoff Farm north of Singling for the barracks they had expected to find at Bining.) Captain Leach deployed his tanks, putting the 2d Platoon under 2d Lt. James N. Farese on the left; the 1st Platoon, commanded by 1st Lt. William F. Goble, on the right; and the 3d Platoon, under 1st Lt. Robert M. Cook, in support. The command tank moved between the 2d and 1st Platoons in front of the 3d. As the 2d Platoon tanks carried no infantry, the three infantry platoons were mounted on the remaining 11 tanks (5 in the 1st Platoon, 4 in the 3d, the commanding officer's tank, and the artillery observer's). The infantry platoons were widely dispersed; the 11 men of the 2d rode on four tanks. Before the attack at 1015, Batteries A and B of the 94th Field Artillery Battalion put 107 rounds of HE on Singling, of which 3 rounds were time-fuzed, the rest impact. The assault guns of the 37th Tank Battalion took up the smoke mission and continued to fire north of the town until the tanks got on their objective. Company A of the battalion turned east and throughout the day fired on the Singling–Bining road and to the north. One platoon of tank destroyers, in position to support the attack, actually did little effective firing during the day because heavy enemy artillery forced the guns back. The other platoon remained in assembly area and was moved into Bining the next day.

ENEMY SELF-PROPELLED GUNS *were located at the far end of the main street (this view looks northwest) so that they could command the whole length of the street. Third Platoon tanks were in position in the walled garden just behind first house on the left.*

Company B tanks advanced rapidly toward Singling, immediately after the artillery preparation, and fired as they moved. But the planned formation was soon broken. Sgt. Joseph Hauptman's tank (2d Platoon) developed engine trouble, ran only in first gear, and so lagged behind; S/Sgt. Max V. Morphew's (3d Platoon) radio failed and he did not bring his tank up at all. The other three tanks of the 3d Platoon crowded the first two until their firing endangered the lead tanks, and they were ordered to stop shooting. As far as the tankers noticed, there was no appreciable return fire from the enemy. As the company approached the town, the 1st and 2d Platoons swung east and west respectively, and the 3d Platoon moved in through the gap to come up substantially on a line. The effect then was of an advancing line of 13 tanks on a front a little less than the length of Singling, or about 600 to 700 yards. Only Lieutenant Farese's tank was

notably in advance. Leading the tanks of S/Sgt. Bernard K. Sowers and Sgt. John H. Parks by about 50 yards, Lieutenant Farese moved up the hillside south of Singling and turned left into an orchard (Map No. 4, inside back cover). As his tank topped the crest of a slight rise just south of a stone farmyard wall, it was hit three times by armor-piercing shells and immediately was set on fire. Lieutenant Farese and his loader, Pfc. William J. Bradley, were killed. The gunner, Cpl. Hulmer C. Miller, was slightly wounded. The rest of the crew got out. Sowers and Parks backed their tanks in defilade behind the rise and radioed Hauptman not to come up.

The shells that hit Lieutenant Farese were probably from a Mark V tank which was parked beside a stone barn, though they may have come from a towed 75-mm antitank gun in the same general vicinity. In any case, what Lieutenant Farese had run into was a nest of enemy armor and defensive emplacements—a perfect defensive position which the enemy used to the fullest and against which Team B fought and plotted all day without even minor success.

Here, just south of the main road and 75 yards from the thickly settled part of town, are a substantial two-story stone house and stone barn and two Maginot pillboxes. One large-domed pillbox, constructed to house an antitank gun defending to the north, is just to the west of the barn. Two concrete buttresses fanned out to the northeast and southeast to form a good field emplacement for an antitank gun defending southeast. The towed antitank gun may have been emplaced there. The orchard southeast is thin, the slope of the hill gentle, so that the turrets of tanks attacking from that direction are enfiladed from the pillbox position at 150 yards. The other pillbox is much smaller, designed probably as a machine-gun outpost to cover the main road. It juts out into the road and, together with the high walls of the farm buildings to the east, provides cover from the town square for a tank parked behind it on the south side of the road. The main street of town makes a broad S-curve which serves to conceal guns on the south side from observation of an attacking force entering the center of town from the south, yet still permits those guns to command the full length of the street to the main square.

In this area at least three Mark V tanks, two SP guns, one towed antitank, and one machine gun (German .42- or possibly an American .50-cal.) successfully blocked every attempt at direct assault or envelopment, and during the day fired at will at all movements across or along the main street and to the south and southeast. Sergeant Sowers and Sergeant Parks found that if they moved their tanks only so far up the slope as to bare their antennae masts they drew armor-piercing fire.

For some time, however, Parks and Sowers were the only ones who suspected the strength of this thicket of enemy defensive armor. They knew that they could not advance, but they had seen only one tank and one gun. The destruction of Lieutenant Farese's tank was, of course, reported to Captain Leach, but Captain Leach at the moment was preoccupied by another more immediately pressing problem, an enemy SP 50 feet in front of him.

### *The Infantry Attack*

When two tank platoons carrying the infantry reached a hedge just south of Singling, they slowed up to let the infantry dismount. Lieutenant Belden got off ahead of his platoon leaders. First to reach him was 2d Lt. William P. Cowgill, whose platoon assembled most rapidly because the men happened to be riding on tanks relatively close together. Lieutenant Belden told Cowgill to take the left side of town, disregard the first three houses on the south, and move in; 2d Lt. Theodore R. Price was ordered to take the right side. Belden said to 1st Lt. Norman C. Padgett, "Follow up after Cowgill." Padgett commented drily afterwards, "I was in support." That was the plan. Neither leaders nor men had any knowledge of the town or of the enemy. They were to clean out the houses, splitting the work as circumstances dictated. Though all the platoon leaders and a good percentage of the men were recent replacements,[1] they had all had combat experience and had fought in towns before.

The enemy they now attacked included as the principal combat element all four companies of its *1st Battalion* of the *111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* (armored infantry of the *11th Panzer Division*), with a total strength three or four times as great as that of the attacking American infantry. They were supported by two "tanks" (probably SP's) of an unknown unit, by the five batteries of the *119th Artillery Battalion* (three or four 105-mm howitzers), organic battalion of the *11th Panzer Division,* and by elements at least of the five battalions of the *208th Volks Artillery Corps* with guns of miscellaneous caliber from 75- to 210-mm. Three days before, headquarters of the *1st Battalion, 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* had been in Singling, while the companies were committed near Hinsingen. On about 4 December the companies moved via Sarralbe to Voellerdingen, where they fought against elements of Combat Command B, 4th Armored Division, and apparently retreated that day or night to the vicinity of Singling. The original mission after the withdrawal was to attack Oermingen, but this mission was changed to the defense of Singling.

Considering its depleted strength (150–200 men), the enemy battalion was well armed. The three companies actually in contact at Singling had one towed 75-mm antitank gun, at least five 81-mm mortars, eight to ten light machine guns, one heavy machine gun, three 20-mm antiaircraft guns, and a *wurfgeraet,* an improvised rocket launcher of steel-supported wooden frames, capable of firing two 200-pound, 36-inch projectiles at a time.

An indication of the relative importance of Singling and Bining in the enemy's defensive plan is the fact that while a battalion with tank and artillery support held Singling, the defense of Bining was entrusted to a single company (the *1st*) of the *61st Antitank Battalion (11th Panzer Division).* This company had about 50 men and 8 old-type 75-mm antitank guns mounted on Mark IV chassis, which a prisoner of war testified could not penetrate a Sherman tank from the

[1] From 9 November to 6 December, the company had received 128 replacements and had suffered 100 percent officer casualties. Lieutenant Belden took command 25 November but had been in the company before; Padgett, Price, and Cowgill were all replacements who had joined the company 13, 16, and 21 November respectively.

front at more than 600 yards. Near Bining, exact location undetermined, were one or possibly two companies of the *2d Battalion, 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment,* whose presence was apparently unknown to the men of the *1st Battalion* of that regiment. Probably at least a company of tanks was in the area, though no identifications were made. Finally, the enemy was employing *Marsch Battalion B*—a collection of some 250 overaged, crippled, or otherwise unfit personnel—as labor troops to dig defenses.

The enemy facing Team B was thus stronger and better armed (particularly in respect to heavy weapons) than the attackers. Nevertheless, before the battle was joined some of the enemy troops had been warned by their own officers that they were facing the 4th Armored Division, "one of the best divisions in the American Army." This they had a chance to discover for themselves in both Singling and Bining as the day wore on.

Lieutenant Cowgill (3d Infantry Platoon) with Pfc. John T. Stanton, his radio operator acting this day as runner, came into town ahead of his platoon. They made their way nearly up to the main square before spotting an enemy SP parked beside No. 44. The building, burning from shell fire, clouded the square with thick smoke. Cowgill turned and shouted back a warning to the tanks not to come up. Padgett with two men of his 1st Squad was nearby. He had not waited to assemble his platoon as they were trained to watch him, when they dismounted, and to follow. This they did, though the 2d Squad was actually held up most of the morning by some house-cleaning (see below). At Cowgill's shouted warning, Captain Leach dismounted and advanced along the street ahead of his tank. The SP up to this point was apparently unaware of them, though the commander's head was out of the turret. Padgett, Leach, Cowgill, and the two men started firing to make him button up. Then the SP moved. It backed across the street to the church preparatory to heading west. In the meantime more infantry had come up from the south. When Lieutenant Belden approached, the street was crowded. Annoyed, he shouted at the men to clear off and fan out into the houses on either side. His shout was less effective than a burst of machine-gun fire from the SP which followed the shout by a matter of seconds. The 1st Squad of the 3d Platoon (Lieutenant Cowgill), which, for the first half hour or so that it remained together, was under command of Cpl. Ralph R. Harrington, ducked into houses on the west side of the street. The 2d Squad, under Sgt. John McPhail, retreated hastily into No. 45 on the east, and the street was nearly clear.

Belden could not see the SP. He stopped a soldier to ask what they were getting ahead. The answer was: "Machine gun." "If it is a machine-gun nest," said Belden, "we'll bring up a tank." In the mysterious pathways of rumor, this remark traveled rearward, lost its "if," and resulted in the ordering of the last tank under Sgt. Kenneth L. Sandrock of the 1st Tank Platoon to clean out an enemy machine-gun nest. Sandrock moved west from his platoon which had driven into the orchard east of town, fired pot shots at the church steeple on the chance that it might be an enemy OP, went on up the south street, and found no machine-gun nest. Then, meeting Captain Leach, Sand-

SINGLING MAIN SQUARE *looking south at House No. 6. Vehicles belong to 12th Armored Division, which relieved 4th Armored. Leach's tank was sited during the day in the opening between houses.*

rock drove his tank in behind No. 6, where he remained separated from his platoon the rest of the day.

In the meantime the enemy SP at the square had completed its turning and headed west along the main street. Leach continued to fire his tommy gun at it. But in so doing he blocked the line of fire of his own tank behind him, and the SP escaped. Leach did not attempt to follow. He had received the report about a tank that had knocked out Lieutenant Farese, and decided that it would be wiser to attempt to get the escaping SP from the flank by moving the 3d Platoon tanks through the west end of the town. He therefore had his own tank back between buildings No. 6 and No. 7, where he was covered from the west and could command the square, and called Lieutenant Cook. Cook's three tanks, his own, the one commanded by Sgt. Giles W. Hayward, and the 105-mm assault gun, commanded by Sgt. Robert G. Grimm, were advancing on the town between the two southern trails. In

front of them the large farm building (No. 11) was on fire and clouds of smoke reduced visibility to the north to a few feet. Cook led his tanks to the right of the burning farm with the idea of cutting across the main street in pursuit of the enemy SP. As they approached, Pvt. Charles R. McCreer, Cook's loader, saw Farese get hit in the orchard to his left. He may have informed Cook, or may have assumed that Cook had seen it too. In any case, Cook did not absorb the information and made his next moves in ignorance of the existence of enemy tanks on his left flank. He drove his tank between the corner of the burning barn and the house north of it, No. 9. Between these buildings, invisible in the smoke, was a low stone retaining wall and about a 2-foot drop into the walled garden in front of No. 11. Hitting this unseen barrier at a 45-degree angle, Cook's tank teetered dangerously on its left tread. For a moment it threatened to overturn, then lumbered on, righting itself. Grimm and Hayward, following, had little trouble as the first tank had broken down the bank.

The garden in which the three tanks found themselves was inclosed on the north and west by a 4-foot concreted stone wall, stepped up to 6 feet high around the northwest corner. Despite this inclosure, they felt, on emerging from the smoke pall, as naked as if they had suddenly come up on a skyline. In fact, their position was seriously exposed from the north, for the continuous slope of the ground northward for several hundred yards canceled out the wall as a screen. Immediately across the street were two smaller gardens with low stone walls, and a dirt trail leading down into the valley. Originally, Cook had no intention of staying there. He planned to cross the road, then work around to the west still intent on trapping the SP which he knew was somewhere on his left. He did not know that its gun now commanded the street, and he would have found out too late if Lieutenant Cowgill had not appeared at that moment to warn him.

Cowgill's platoon had set out immediately after the escape of the SP from the square to move into the west side of town. Cowgill, himself, with two men of his 1st Squad (Harrington and Pvt. Grover C. Alexander), moved along the south side of the street. (The other four men of the squad stayed behind near No. 7 from which later on they undertook an independent mission to the north.) Cowgill, Harrington, and Alexander made their way to No. 10 and from there could see two German SP's parked on either side of the street 200 yards to the west. It was then that Cowgill, coming around No. 10 into the garden into which Cook's tanks had just driven, found Cook and warned him of the enemy. Cowgill said, "There is a Kraut tank behind the third building down to the west." Cook got the impression that the "tank" was located behind a house which he could see on the north side of the street. He therefore had his tank and Grimm's 105 chop down the corner of the wall in front of them. This fire probably nettled the enemy into replying, and a round of 75-mm struck the northwest corner of No. 10 not far from where Cowgill was standing. Cook dismounted and with Cowgill walked around to the east side of the building which had been hit.

In the meantime the 2d Squad of Cowgill's platoon under Sergeant McPhail had moved on from No. 45 into which the SP's machine gun at the square had driven them. Satisfied that there were no enemy in No. 45, the seven men crossed the square and entered No. 28, a handsome low-lying stone house set back from the street and surrounded by a 2-foot wall, surmounted by an iron railing. In this house McPhail and his men discovered twelve civilians sheltering in the cellar. A few minutes were consumed in searching them, then the squad set out to continue the sweep of the north side of the street. McPhail and Tech. 4 Ben A. Todd emerged through the front door of No. 28 and made a dash to the schoolhouse. A third man tried to follow but ducked back when machine-gun bullets spattered in the front yard. Then and for the rest of the day, No. 28 was under direct fire from the enemy tanks on the west. McPhail and Todd reached the school; the rest of the squad stayed in No. 28. Lieutenant Cowgill, standing on the other side of the street, shouted across to ask McPhail whether he could see the enemy SP's. He could. Cowgill ordered him to fire. Lieuant Cook, having seen the true location of the SP's, returned to his tank and backed it into an alley between No. 9 and No. 10, just wide

GARDEN *in which Third Platoon tanks took up firing positions. The destroyed portion of the wall (center) was chopped down by Sgt. Grimm's 105–howitzer. Lt. Cowgill's men fired bazookas from the attic of the house on the left, through the gaps in the roof tiles.*

MAIN STREET IN SINGLING, *showing the schoolhouse (opposite House No. 8) and looking northwest, where the road curves.*

enough to let him through. He told Grimm and Hayward about the enemy SP's, asked Grimm whether he thought he could get out of the garden if necessary, and Grimm thought he could. Cook then called Captain Leach and asked whether tanks could be sent around to hit the enemy guns from the southwest. Leach radioed orders to Sowers (2d Tank Platoon) to try to go through the burning barn (No. 11) and find a way to attack the SP's. Sowers tried, but got only a few yards. Just beyond the wall, the nose of his tank, exposed through the gate to the west, was shot at. Convinced that advance was impossible, Sowers returned to the orchard.

Every attempt to deal with the enemy so far had been made in ignorance both of the layout of the town and of the enemy position. This Lieutenant Cowgill set out to remedy and, while Cook maneuvered his tanks, Cowgill and his two men started on a devious exploratory journey through the houses to the west.

At the same time McPhail and Todd, who had fired a few rounds at the SP's, discovered what seemed to them more profitable targets in enemy infantry in the valley to the north. This enemy was also occupying the attention of two other groups of men in town. The four men of Cowgill's 1st Squad (Pvt. Joseph C. Bridges, Pvt. William M. Convery, Pfc. Frank M. O. Asplund, and Pfc. L. W. Battles) who had stayed at the square when the squad leader, Harrington, had accompanied Lieutenant Cowgill,

spotted 15–18 Germans near a pillbox in the valley. They crossed the street, took up firing positions in the yard of No. 28, and shot into the Germans. They thought two were hit before the group dispersed. They continued to fire until an officer across the street by the church shouted at them to stop.

The officer was Lieutenant Price (1st Platoon), whose men had come last into town because they had stopped at two small pillboxes south of Singling to take and disarm 11 unresisting Germans. Although Price's mission had been to occupy the east end of town, when he arrived at the square he could see Lieutenant Padgett's (2d Platoon) men already moving along the houses to the east. Lieutenant Cowgill's men were on the west. Price decided to go north. Tech/Sgt. Lovell P. Mitchell with four men cleaned out the houses on the southeast corner of the square while S/Sgt. John Sayers and six men took over No. 35. Price with the rest of his platoon crossed the street to the back of the church, moved along the hard-surfaced alleyway between the church and No. 35. Posting Pvts. Rudolph Aguilar and Randall S. Brownrigg at the northeast corner to watch in that direction, Price and four men followed the alley around the north side of the church. At the corner they could see the Germans at the pillbox who had already been spotted by the four 3d Platoon men. A burp gun was firing from somewhere to the northwest. The steep drop of the Singling ridge to the north made it possible for Price's men to return fire over the roofs of the houses back of No. 28.

Under cover of this Lieutenant Price and Sgt. Elmer White planned to work their way into the valley behind the northeast row of houses. But they were checked at the outset by a heavy wire fence which, hooked to the

VIEW NORTHEAST FROM SINGLING *toward ridge where Maginot Line defenses were. German tanks were seen on ridge during the battle. An artillery observer had OP on roof of this house (No. 33).*

corners of No. 34 and No. 35, inclosed the alleyway. It was at least six feet high and too exposed to enemy observation to be scaled. It would have to be cut. The platoon wirecutters, however, had been entrusted to a man who two days before had been evacuated, taking the cutters with him. White went into No. 34 to look for tools. While he was in there, the Germans in the valley were getting ready to give up. They were encouraged in this not only by the continuing small-arms fire of Price's men and the four men of the 3d Platoon, but also by machine-gun and HE fire from Lieutenant Cook's tanks. Sergeant Grimm started it by dispatching a lone German a few hundred yards away with 100 rounds of .30-cal. Minutes later, Grimm saw six Germans jump up and run into the valley pillbox. In his own words, he "closed the door for them with HE." All three tanks also periodically fired HE at the ridge 1,200 yards to the north, more to register the range of the skyline on which German tanks were likely to appear than to engage specific targets. The total effect, however, was to throw a large volume of fire in the direction of a handful of enemy, and shortly Lieutenant Price saw white cloths wave from the pillbox. It was then that he ordered the men across the street to cease fire. Twelve Germans walked up the hill and surrendered to Price. One who spoke some English reported that there were five more in the valley who were anxious to surrender but were afraid to come out. After all the Germans had been disarmed, Price sent one back down the hill to corral his comrades.

At that moment, however, a volley of enemy mortar and artillery struck the square. One shell hit No. 34 and Sergeant White inside was wounded in the head by fragments and wood splinters. Sayers and Pvt. Randall S. Brownrigg outside and Cpl. Frank B. McElwee in No. 43 were slightly wounded. Price and his men ducked back from the alley, and began occupying houses on the square where they were to remain all day. Although Price believed that enemy held the houses to the north, he decided not to attack them, because by advancing north he would move out of contact with the platoons on his flanks. No more was seen of the German emissary or the five volunteers for capture. The 11 still in the possession of the 1st Platoon were sent down the road south. Just

as these started off, two more walked up the hill to the schoolhouse and surrendered to McPhail and Todd. McPhail escorted these two across the square to the street south. There, seeing Price's 11 walking down the street, he motioned to his 2 to fall in with them, and, himself, returned to the school. He and Todd then climbed to the second story, and resumed the business of shooting enemy in the valley. The four men of the 1st Squad decided then to go down to the pillbox to get whatever Germans might still be in it. They found none, but did draw machine-gun fire from the direction of Welschoff Farm. Battles was wounded in the leg and the squad was pinned in place for several hours.

From the east end of town, Lieutenant Padgett (2d Infantry Platoon) had also seen the enemy infantry in the valley, but he had seen two other things which worried him far more—a rocket launcher (*wurfgeraet*) firing from about 800 yards west of Welschoff Farm, and seven enemy tanks on a ridge northeast. Padgett was in No. 39, which he had reached with his 1st Squad without difficulty after going through the three small houses to the west. These houses were occupied only by a few scared civilians who were rounded up and sheltered in No. 39. House No. 39 was a fine place to be. Outwardly just another farm house, it was actually a fortress, with walls of 3-foot concrete reinforced with steel girders. Nevertheless, Padgett was still worried. Protection enough from artillery and the *wurfgeraet* (which Padgett decided was shooting short anyway), the house would not be of much avail against the enemy tanks. More reassuring were the four tanks of the 1st Platoon (Lieutenant Goble) which pulled into position in the orchard opposite No. 39 about the same time that Padgett arrived there. The enemy armor, though threatening, was still too far away for direct action. Padgett sent his runner to report the situation to Lieutenant Belden and also to find the 2d Squad of his own platoon and bring them up. When the runner failed to return in what seemed to Padgett a reasonable time, he sent out another man, Pvt. Lonnie G. Blevins, on the same mission.

Blevins left on his run under the impression that the infantry company CP was at No. 3 where it had first been set up by Belden on entering the town. Actually Belden had stayed in that house less than half an hour, only long enough to set up the radio and notify the 51st Infantry Battalion that he was in town. He then moved to No. 28. Blevins reached No. 44, where he met a man of Price's platoon and was warned not to cross the square which enemy guns to the west covered. Blevins went around No. 44 and on up the road south to No. 3. Finding no one, he returned along the west side of the street and got as far as No. 5. A tanker, one of Sandrock's or the forward observer's crew, waylaid Blevins and told him to take charge of a prisoner who had just walked up to the tank and surrendered. At No. 7 Blevins with his prisoner met Battles who had not yet started for the valley pillbox. Battles took temporary charge of the prisoner while Blevins dashed through a burst of machine-gun fire across to No. 28. In a few minutes he reappeared in the door and motioned to Battles to send the prisoner over. Half his mission accomplished, Blevins still had to find the 2d

Squad. By luck he met them near No. 44 and delivered his message to Pfc. Phillip E. Scharz in charge.

Scharz's squad had already with little effort accomplished one of the most notable successes of the day. Investigating the southernmost house of town, which the rest of the infantry, entering between No. 2 and No. 3, had bypassed, they found a Frenchman and asked whether there were any Germans inside. He shook his head, but Scharz's men, noticing a radio antenna thrusting out of a cellar window, were suspicious. Four of them surrounded the house, and Scharz and Pfc. Lewis R. Dennis went in. In the cellar they found 28 German enlisted men and 2 officers. None offered any resistance. They were frisked and evacuated. A search of the house then revealed large stores of small arms and ammunition. When the squad emerged, they met on the road the 13 prisoners sent back by Lieutenant Price and McPhail. Having discovered enemy in one house, they searched with slow caution the others along the street, and so arrived late at the square where Blevins found them.

When Blevins had completed his mission of telling Scharz to take his squad east, the enemy artillery and mortar which had wounded four of Price's men was falling around the church. Blevins crossed the street to No. 7 to "see Battles." With Battles now was 1st Sgt. Dellas B. Cannon who was on his way to the CP. Cannon sprinted across to No. 28; Blevins followed, and then worked east back to No. 39.

Cannon had not been in the CP long before a round of 75-mm hit the building. Pfc. John E. Tsinetakes was scratched by dislodged plaster but there were no other casualties. The fire had quite possibly been drawn from one of the enemy SP's by the recent activity in the street. In any case the shot decided Cannon to go west to where the SP's were and "get a closer look." He invited McPhail who had just come over from the school to go along. The two set out, taking almost exactly the route that Lieutenant Cowgill, unknown to them, had already followed twice.

Sergeant Grimm had started Cowgill on his first journey from the garden, which the 3d Platoon tanks occupied, by blasting open the door of No. 12 with a burst of .50-cal. Cowgill and his two men entered and climbed to the attic. They found that, although they could see the two enemy SP's through the damaged tiling on the roof, they could not see beyond. They continued exploration westward. For one reason or another they were unable to reach the roofs of the next three buildings. In the last (No. 17) they found their progress blocked by the lack of openings of any kind in the west wall. They backtracked through the courtyard between No. 16 and No. 15 and then walked through an opening in the south wall out into a garden-orchard walled with concreted stone like all the Singling gardens. They crawled to a gap in the wall and found themselves within spitting distance of the two SP's. Beyond, in an arc or line not more than 200 yards distant, they saw the outlines of three enemy tanks. They returned at once to Lieutenant Cook's position to report. Cowgill sent word to Lieutenant Belden that there were "five enemy tanks on the west" and then he took Lieutenant Cook back to the OP at the

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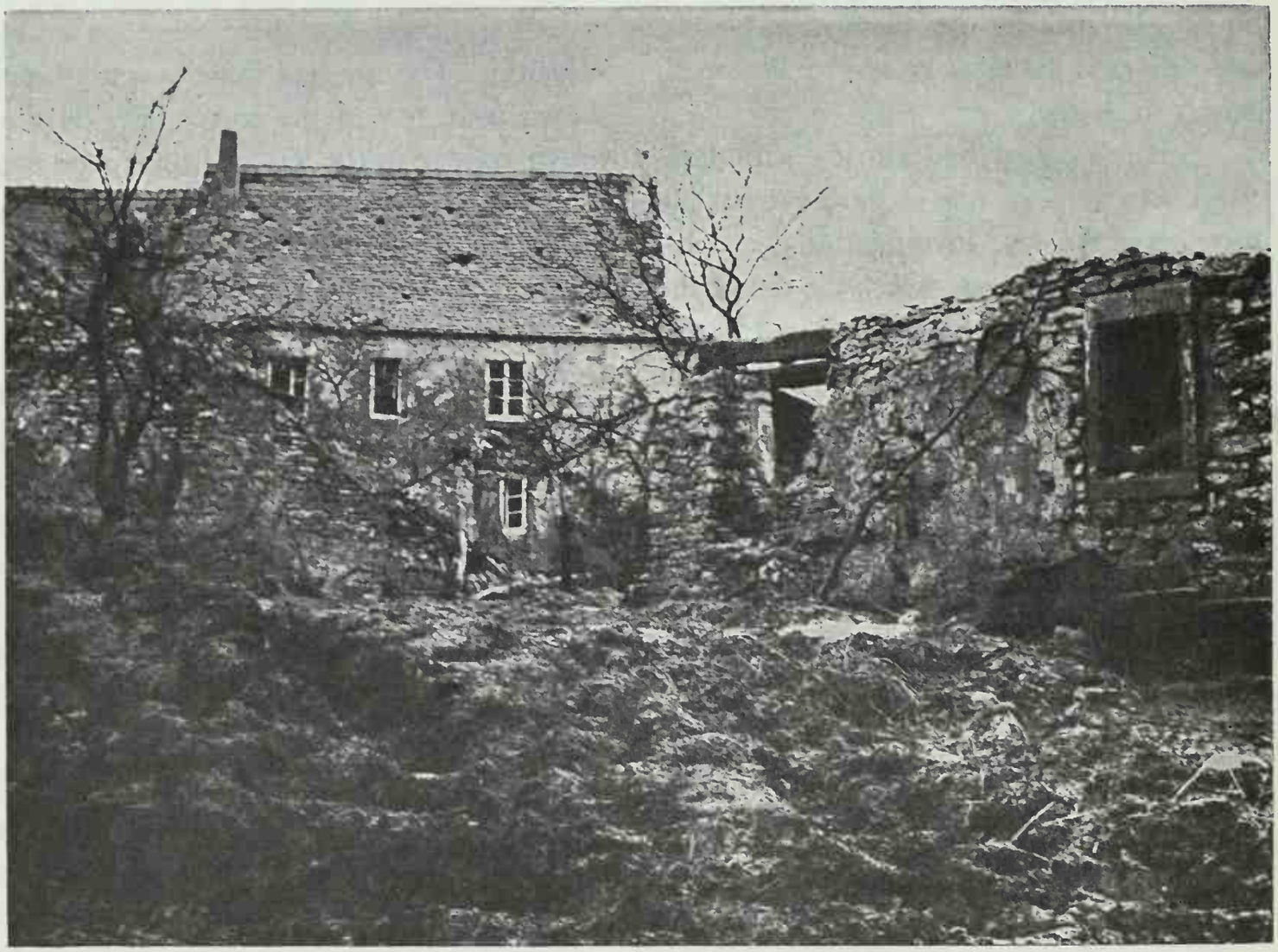


COURTYARD *and manure pile for Houses 8, 9, and 10, where Lt. Cook parked his tank. View north. Note heavy stone construction.*

wall. Harrington and Alexander were left at No. 12, which Cowgill decided was the most suitable spot he had seen for his platoon headquarters.

When Cook returned from his reconnaissance, he was impressed with both the strength of the German position and the difficulty of dislodging them. Their command of the main street and of the nose of the ridge west of town made it impossible for tanks to attack them. Artillery seemed, despite the proximity of our own troops, the most logical answer, and Cook therefore went to look for the observer, 1st Lt. Donald E. Guild. Guild was at the infantry company CP with Lieutenant Belden and Captain Leach. When Cook joined them, the four officers discussed the problem. Lieutenant Guild felt that artillery could not be brought down without unduly endangering friendly troops. Mortar fire would be fine, but the infantry had brought no mortars because they had too few men to man them and carry ammunition. The mortar squad, down to three men, were armed with a bazooka. Lieutenant Cook suggested that the street might be smoked

OPEN YARD *in foreground is where Hayward and Grimm were parked. Lt. Cook backed his tank into alley shown blocked by truck.*

with grenades and the tank mortars. Behind that screen the tanks might cross the street and attack the enemy from the northeast. Actually he felt that the smoke alone would be enough to force the SP's to withdraw. The proposal was not seriously considered because Captain Leach preferred to try the infantry bazookas. This was the decision, and the job was given to Lieutenant Cowgill.

He sent back to ask Belden for a bazooka, and riflemen to protect it. His plan was to shoot at the Germans from the attic of his CP. Lieutenant Guild advised that it would take the SP about two minutes to elevate its gun to fire, and that was considered ample time to launch the rockets and move out. Belden sent Pfc. Kenneth L. Bangert and Pvt. Frank LeDuc down to Cowgill with the headquarters bazooka. Headquarters runner, Pfc. Melvin P. Flynn, went over to No. 7 occupied by seven men of the machine-gun and mortar squads. His message apparently was, "Lieutenant Cowgill wants some riflemen to protect his bazookamen." What happened was that S/Sgt. John W. Herring, the two men of his mortar squad

who carried the second bazooka of the company, and S/Sgt. Patrick H. Dennis, leader of the machine-gun squad, went down to No. 12; the other three men of the machine-gun squad remained all the rest of the day at No. 7 where, having no field of fire, they were unable to set up their gun.

### *Stalemate in Singling*

While Cowgill's men got ready to attack the German tanks on the west, a series of incidents occurred to suggest that enemy armor might be forming on the north for a counterattack on Singling. Tanks to the north were observed moving east; prepared artillery concentrations were laid on the town; the enemy on the west renewed his interest in our tanks in that sector (2d Platoon); and finally tanks came into the east side of town.

The enemy tanks (three to five) moving on the north apparently along a road were spotted and reported by Sergeant Grimm, but as the range was extreme he did not fire. Furthermore, Grimm's gun was trained through the gap in the wall to the northwest against the SP threat. Sergeant Hayward had adjusted on the north ridge and Grimm left that zone of fire to him.

HAUPTMAN'S DESTROYED TANK *in orchard south of Houses 11 and 13. Most of damage was done by Germans who set fire to the tank before our forces retired from Singling during evening of 6 December.*

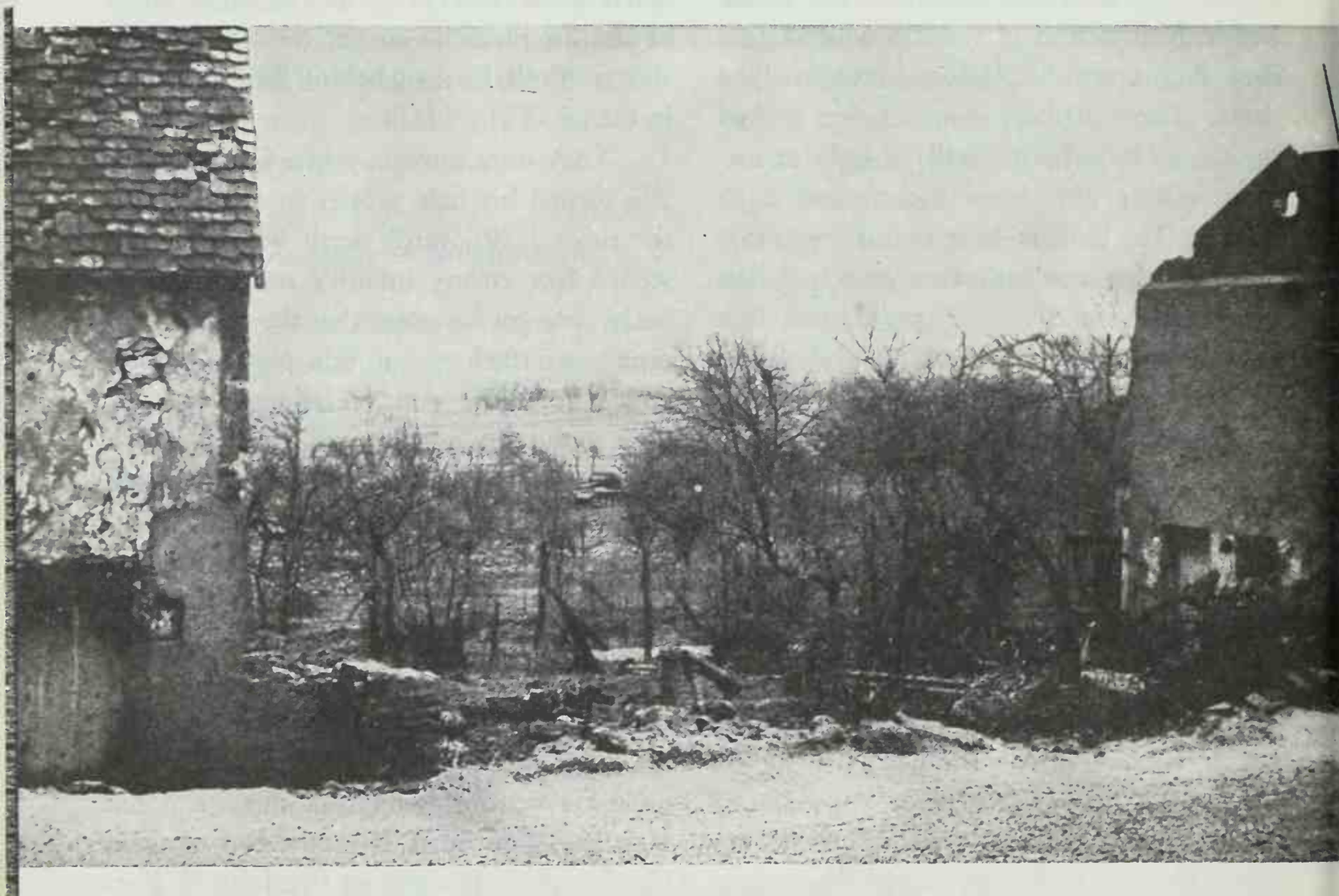
Lieutenant Cook moved his tank into the courtyard of the cluster of buildings (No. 8–No. 10) where he could observe north. Suddenly just west of town a white signal flare shot upward. Almost immediately a short, intense artillery concentration rocked the town. Mixed with shells of light or medium caliber were some rockets and some mortar. The tankers' later estimate was that the fire was about equivalent to a battalion concentration of five-minute duration, that at times as many as 20 shells hit in the same instant.

In the 2d Tank Platoon sector the shelling followed by only a few minutes an incident to which the tankers paid little attention at the time. A dismounted German suddenly appeared on the rise in front of them and walked across the orchard less than 50 yards away. Before the tanks could adjust fire on him, he had gone. The intense shelling, which started almost immediately, forced the tanks to back a few yards to a cabbage patch beside the orchard trail. When the artillery fire broke off, they stayed where they were, and there by a curious freak Sergeant Hauptman a few minutes later lost his tank. A German AP shell hit the crest of the rise 100 yards in front of him, ricocheted off the ground, and plowed into the right side of Hauptman's turret. His loader, Pfc. William J. McVicker, was killed. If the German tanks west of town aimed that shell to carom into the tanks parked where they had been observed by the lone infantryman, the accuracy of this shot was most remarkable. The reaction of the tankers at the time, however, was that they were still not defiladed from the enemy northwest. Lieutenant Cook, to whom Hauptman reported his loss in the temporary absence of Captain Leach, ordered Sowers and Parks (the remaining tanks of the 2d Platoon) to get their tanks into shelter. Both drove up behind the 3d Platoon in the lee of No. 11.

They were moving when Grimm casually turned his field glasses to a pillbox on the ridge 1,200 yards north where he had seen a few enemy infantry minutes previously. He got his glasses on the spot just in time to see the long gun tube of the German tank's 75 flame and fire directly at him. The round hit nearby, and Grimm had a split second to decide whether to shoot back or run for it. He figured that his 105 without power traverse could not be laid in less than 20 seconds. That was too long. He threw his tank in gear and backed out of the garden. He had just started when a second round hit Hayward's tank on the sprocket, crippling it. In the next few seconds Hayward was hit four times and the tank began to burn. Gunner Cpl. Angelo Ginoli and the bowgunner Pvt. John H. Furlow were killed; Hayward and his loader, Pfc. Vern L. Thomas, were wounded. Grimm made good his escape through the opening between No. 9 and No. 11. Outside, the tank bogged down in the heavy mud, and the crew evacuated while Grimm got Sowers to pull him out.

The 2d and 3d Platoons, Sergeant Sandrock of the 1st Platoon, the command and the artillery observer's tanks were now all bunched and immobilized in the area southwest of the square which, covered on three sides by buildings, was the only relatively safe place in town for tanks. It was becoming

FITZGERALD'S FIRING POSITION, *looking north from road between Houses 37 and 38. The Mark V tank destroyed by Fitzgerald is in almost the exact center of the fields beyond the road.*



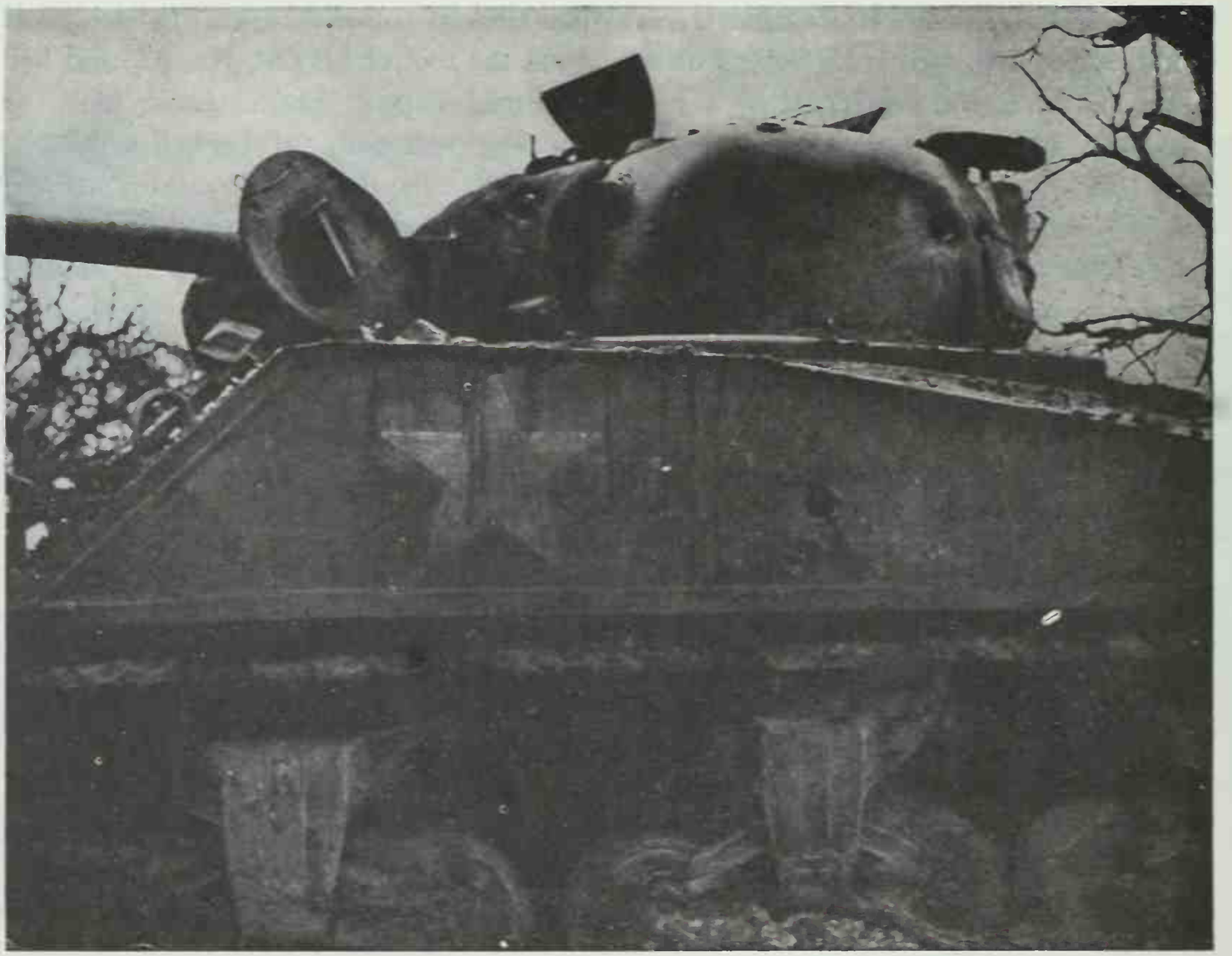
increasingly apparent to both infantry and tanks that, with the small forces at their disposal and against an enemy who had at least equal strength and every terrain advantage, they could not hope to secure their position in town by attack. They had, instead, to make such dispositions as would complement the enemy's stalemate and wait it out. They were expecting momentarily relief by units of Combat Command B. Colonel Abrams had already called Captain Leach to tell him the relieving companies were on their way. In the meantime there was no point in incurring needless casualties. Lieutenant Price, after having four men lightly wounded by artillery, gave strict orders to his platoon to stay inside unless the Germans counterattacked. Lieutenant Padgett's men holed up in the cellar of their fortress house and the lieutenant himself found a bed which, as long as there was no place to go, he made his personal headquarters.

While the enemy tanks, however, on the north still threatened to attack, Padgett was very busy trying to find ways to deal with them. He sent his runner, Blevins, across

the street to warn the 1st Platoon tanks (Lieutenant Goble) in the orchard. (Goble's vision to the northeast was obstructed by a 6–7 foot bush and apple-tree hedge, and by houses and brush on the north side of the road.) Lieutenant Padgett himself then set out to find the artillery observer to see whether a concentration could not be put on the enemy to discourage if not destroy him. He tried four times to walk down the street to the company CP; three times he was turned back by spurts of machine-gun bullets on the west side of No. 37. The fourth time he got through to report to Lieutenant Belden, but he could not find Lieutenant Guild. It was late in the afternoon when Padgett returned to his own CP.

While Padgett had been trying to get to Belden, Lieutenant Guild, the observer, had already spotted the enemy tanks himself from the roof of his OP, No. 33, and had informed Captain Leach. Leach took the warning personally to Lieutenant Goble. Goble, figuring that if the Germans attacked they would come either down the road or in back of the houses opposite, had Sgt. Robert G. Fitzgerald on the right move his tank down the hill to within 15 yards of the edge of the road, where he could observe better to the northeast. Fitzgerald kept his gun sights at 1,400 yards, the range to the northerly ridge where the enemy was reported. The first tank to appear, however, drew up between No. 37 and No. 38 less than 150 yards away, heading toward the church. The enemy Mark V and Fitzgerald saw each other at about the same time, but neither could immediately fire. While the enemy

MARK V TANK *destroyed by fire from Fitzgerald's tank. Enemy tank is headed southwest, and the gun has not started to swivel southward to engage Fitzgerald. Note broken track, front bogie.*



LT. GOBLE'S TANK, *showing the holes made by enemy shells.*

started to traverse his turret, Fitzgerald brought his gun down. He shot first and, at point-blank range, put the first round into the Mark V, setting it on fire. One man jumped out and ran behind one of the houses. Fitzgerald fired two more rounds into the burning tank.

Later, on warning by Lieutenant Padgett's infantry that more enemy tanks were approaching from the northeast, he drove his tank through the hedge and east along the road almost to the bend where observation north and east was clear. He saw an enemy tank, but before he could adjust his sights the German fired smoke and in a few seconds disappeared as effectively as an octopus behind its self-made cloud and escaped. Rockets then began to fall close to Fitzgerald's tank. Whether this was aimed fire from the battery near Welschoff Farm or simply a part of the miscellaneous area concentration on the town, Fitzgerald did not stay to find out. He retired westward to the concealment of the hedge, and there, leaving his tank, crossed with Lieutenant Goble to Padgett's CP. From the house they could see a Mark V in the valley

northeast, apparently parked with its gun covering the road east, facing, that is, at right angles to the tankers' observation. Fitzgerald went back to try a shot at it. Again he moved his tank east, getting a sight on the enemy between two trees. The second round was a hit; one more fired the tank. He then shot a round or two at another Mark V facing him about 800 yards away, at which Sgt. Emil Del Vecchio on the hill behind him was also firing. Both 75-mm and 76.2-mm shells, however, bounced off the front armor plate of the enemy. Fitzgerald decided to move back to his hedge. Back in No. 39 again he saw an enemy SP moving east in the vicinity of Welschoff Farm.

Rather than risk exposing his tank again by moving it out to the east, Fitzgerald decided to wait until the SP came around behind the farm and emerged into his field of fire. But the SP did not emerge. Whether, concealed among the farm buildings, it fired into the 1st Platoon tanks cannot certainly be determined. But in any case, a short while after it had disappeared, two rounds of AP hit Lieutenant Goble's tank in quick succession. The first round set it on fire and wounded Goble and his gunner, Cpl. Therman E. Hale. The second round penetrated the turret, then apparently richocheted inside until its momentum was spent, and finally landed in the lap of the driver, Tech. 5 John J. Nelsen. Nelsen dropped the hot shell, scrambled out, and with the loader, Pvt. Joseph P. Cocchiara, ran from the burning tank. In the excitement they headed the wrong way and high-tailed up the main street into the center of town. There they paused long enough to ask some infantrymen where the tanks were. Directed southward, they eventually came on Sergeant Sowers' tank and got inside.

As soon as Lieutenant Goble was hit, S/Sgt. John J. Fitzpatrick took command of the platoon and ordered them to back over the ridge behind them into defilade from the enemy north. As they backed, a round of HE exploded in front of Del Vecchio's tank, splattering it with fragments. The enemy continued to fire at Goble's tank, but the others reached the cover of the hill without loss.

On the other side of town Lieutenant Cowgill's bazookas in the attic of No. 12 were getting ready to fire at one enemy SP. (One of the two guns in the street had withdrawn by this time.) In the garden east of No. 12 Sergeant Hayward's tank was burning. McPhail, leader of the 2d Squad, and Company 1st Sergeant Cannon were on their way westward to have a look at the SP's, unaware that the reconnaissance had already been made and action taken as a result of it. They sprinted past the burning tank, picked up Harrington at the chapel, and followed Lieutenant Cowgill's previous route to the wall beside No. 17. Through the same gap Cowgill had used to observe, the three men fired at Germans standing near the tanks and pillboxes. They hit one who rolled down the slope. After half a dozen rounds, they moved back. Cannon and Harrington went to the basement of No. 12, where they found S/Sgt. Patrick H. Dennis and S/Sgt. Harold A. Hollands, both with rifles, preparing to cover from the basement windows the bazookamen, then getting set to fire through the roof. One of the two bazookas with old-type firing

mechanism failed to go off. From the other, the three men in the attic launched five rounds in turn at the SP. Only the last hit, and it did no more than knock a fragment off the right side of the turret. It did, however, cause the crew to jump out, and two were shot by the four men in the basement. Hardly had this happened when a Mark V drew up alongside the damaged SP and sent a round crashing into the side of No. 12. At about the same time another shell from the north struck the building at its foundations, showering the men in the cellar with plaster. It was a narrow escape on both scores, but no one was hurt. Cowgill moved his men to No. 13, which turned out to be another of Singling's thick-walled fortress-farms. Here the 3d Platoon sat out the second of the enemy's short, sharp artillery concentrations, which scored three hits on the building but did little damage.

### *Relief of Team B*

It was now getting late in the afternoon, and still the relief scheduled to take place an hour or more earlier had not been accomplished. It was shortly past noon that Colonel Abrams had been ordered by Brig. Gen. Herbert L. Earnest, Combat Command A, to turn over Singling to Combat Command B and get ready to move on his own objective, Bining and Rohrbach. On information that his tanks and infantry were in town, Colonel Abrams told Maj. Albin F. Irzyk, commanding officer, 8th Tank Battalion, in the presence of Major Alanis, commanding officer, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, that he was "ready to turn over to them their objective—and without a fight." Despite constant fire from the direction of Singling, the relieving units henceforth acted on the assumption that the town was clear.

Major Irzyk decided to send Company C of his battalion in with Company B of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion. The infantry had been in assembly area 3,000 yards south of Singling for more than an hour; the tanks were moving up when orders reached the commander of Company C, 1st Lt. William J. Marshall. The orders were to pick up the infantry, go into Singling, contact the commanding officer of the tank company in town, and take over the outposting with infantry and tanks. In addition to the outposts, patrols were to be sent out north. Marshall was instructed to enter town "as the other unit had done." With some of the 35–40 men of Company B of the 10th mounted on all his tanks, Marshall set off to carry out these instructions exactly, as his tanks moved in at about 1400 following the tracks of Company B, 37th Tank Battalion.

At the south edge of town the 1st Tank Platoon (2d Lt. George Gray), in the lead, turned northwest following the approach route of Lieutenant Farese. Farese's two knocked-out tanks were, of course, still where they had been hit. Although Lieutenant Gray remarked that the tank hatches were open and there was no sign of the crew, he did not suspect that the tanks were out of action. Approaching the corner of the wall at No. 14, he saw ahead of him near the road a tank which he assumed to be American since he believed no enemy were in town. When, therefore, Lieutenant Marshall called to ask how he was making out, he replied, "OK, as soon as

I get around this corner." Then he was hit by two rounds of AP. The gunner, Cpl. Tauno H. Aro, was killed. Gray, seriously wounded, was evacuated to Lieutenant Cowgill's CP at No. 13, arriving there just as McPhail, Cannon, and Harrington returned from their reconnaissance trip to the west wall.

As soon as Gray was hit, Lieutenant Marshall ordered the 2d Platoon (S/Sgt. Edwin J. De Rosia) to move east and try to circle behind the enemy tank that had knocked out Gray. De Rosia, however, had not moved far when he reported enemy direct fire from north and east which he could not exactly locate. Marshall then ordered all tanks to withdraw to the reverse slope of the ridge south of town. Except the men who had been riding Gray's tank and who dismounted when the tank was hit to assemble near No. 49, the infantry remained on the decks of the tanks when they withdrew. 1st Lt. Robert F. Lange, commanding officer of Company B, 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, went into town to make contact with Lieutenant Belden. At the same time Lieutenant Marshall returned with his tank to the 8th Tank Battalion to consult with Major Irzyk.

Lange found Captain Leach in a tank outside of town and together they went to No. 28 to talk with Lieutenant Belden. The decision agreed on by the three commanders was to relieve Lieutenant Cowgill and Lieutenant Padgett in place; Lieutenant Price was to be withdrawn first from the center of town without relief. Company B of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion had organized its handful of men into 2 platoons; about 15 men in one, 18 in the other. While Lieutenant Lange sent a noncommissioned officer to meet his platoon leaders, inform them of the decision, and guide them into town, Captain Leach went to look for Lieutenant Marshall and arrange for the relief of his tanks.

The afternoon was wearing on and Colonel Abrams began to worry; he wanted to pull his tanks out of Singling as soon as possible. He called Captain Leach to find out how the relief was progressing. In Captain Leach's absence Lieutenant Cook took the call and made a report which could not have been very reassuring. He said that there were five enemy tanks west of the town and that from three to five more had been observed moving down the ridge to their front. He said that one enemy tank had been knocked out by the 1st Platoon on the right. He detailed the disposition of his platoons and reported that they were receiving heavy enemy artillery fire and that the enemy was laying a smoke screen on the north. (Lieutenant Cook did not know at the time that this was put down by the Mark V to cover its escape from Fitzgerald's fire; he believed that it might herald a German counterattack.) He told Colonel Abrams that the 51st Infantry was still outposting the town and that the 10th Infantry was in process of relieving them. He added that he was not in contact with the infantry's commanding officer; that he had not yet heard from Captain Leach who was conferring with Lieutenant Marshall.

Colonel Abrams called back a little later and told Cook to organize the company tanks, pick up the 51st Infantry, and move out immediately whether he found Captain Leach or not. Cook notified all tanks to

prepare for immediate withdrawal. In fact, however, the withdrawal was delayed about half an hour to allow the relieving infantry to consolidate their positions.

Lieutenant Lange made few changes in Lieutenant Belden's dispositions, except to post most of his men outside the buildings to guard against enemy infiltration during the night. He established his CP at No. 45 to get away from the direct fire that had been harassing No. 28 all day.

Captain Leach, in the meantime, had arrived at the Company C, 8th Tank Battalion position in the absence of Lieutenant Marshall, but was able to talk to Marshall over Sergeant De Rosia's radio. Leach reported the situation in Singling as follows: he said there were four enemy SP's in town, but he thought one had been knocked out by a bazooka; some enemy infantry occupied the northern part of the town (Lieutenant Lange, who put outposts to the north later, reported no enemy there); a Panther tank to the northeast of town had fired on our tanks when they exposed themselves in that direction. Leach then asked Marshall how long it would be before the latter relieved him. Marshall, who had just been ordered by Major Irzyk to stay put, replied that he would not come into town "until my orders are changed."

This change in plan was not known to the infantry in town, who were completing the relief as scheduled. Most of the wounded had already been evacuated earlier on Sergeant Morphew's tank, which due to radio failure had not been in action but was brought up expressly to take the wounded back. No regular evacuation vehicles were available at battalion, as Lieutenant Cook ascertained early in the afternoon when he called just after Sergeant Hayward was hit. Some wounded nevertheless remained to be evacuated by the withdrawing infantry. Cowgill and Padgett led their men to the street south to a rendezvous with the tanks in the vicinity of No. 3. Price, who did not have to wait for relief, moved his men out first and met the tanks outside town beside the two pillboxes that had been cleaned out by Padgett's 2d Squad that morning. Here they picked up the last prisoner of the day, a sleepy German who had to be prodded into surrender. He was lying on the ground swathed in a belt of .50-cal. ammunition and evinced no interest in his capture.

It was already getting dark when Cook moved his tanks out. They collected the infantry as arranged, and found Captain Leach with Lieutenant Marshall about 400 yards south of town. As the 2d and 3d Platoon tanks moved out together and the 1st Platoon on the right headed back to join them further south, another heavy enemy artillery concentration fell among them, but by a miracle caused only one light casualty, Pvt. Genar W. Ferguson, 2d Infantry Platoon, who was hit in the leg To cover the withdrawal, all tanks swiveled their guns north and fired back into Singling. The enemy tanks replied and the AP tracers streaked through the gathering darkness. Two rounds landed within a few feet of Sergeant Del Vecchio's tank before the fire fight was taken up by Lieutenant Marshall's tanks and the enemy shifted his attention to them.

After Captain Leach's tanks had pulled out, the relief infantry company in Singling

remained more than three hours without direct tank support. During this time the enemy on the west crept up to the two destroyed tanks of Farese's platoon and started the battery chargers. It may be that they were going to attempt to drive the tanks away. When the infantry outposts at No. 14 heard the engines, they believed them to be relieving tanks which they were expecting. 2d Lt. Robert J. Victor, commanding the platoon which took over Lieutenant Cowgill's sector, went out with one of his squad leaders to investigate. He approached one of the tanks to within 25 feet, then stopped. The silhouette of the three figures on top of the tank made him suspicious; their overcoats were too long, their helmets too sharply beaked. As Victor and his sergeant had only one carbine, they returned to the CP to pick up weapons and another man. Approaching the tank the second time, they were fired on by a burp gun, which they answered with rifle fire and grenades. The enemy retreated but later in the night, returned to set fire to the tanks.

Lieutenant Lange, in the meantime, worried about his thinly outposted positions in town, had gone out to see Lieutenant Marshall and, as he said, "try to move the tanks in personally." As Lieutenant Marshall had been called back shortly after dark to battalion by Major Irzyk, commanding the 8th Tank Battalion, Lieutenant Lange found Sergeant De Rosia temporarily in command. Major Irzyk and Capt. Abraham J. Baum, S–3 of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, were also in the company area at the time.

The question of whether to attempt to hold in the town for the night or withdraw was discussed. Although Major Irzyk's first plan was to send one platoon of tanks in to support the infantry, he reversed his decision after talking to Lange. He was already doubtful, because he could see no very good reason for holding the town when the enemy occupied all the high ground north and east. Lange reported that with less than 50 men at his disposal he had had to outpost very thinly and that it would be easy for the enemy to probe out these outposts during the night and infiltrate through his whole position. Major Irzyk was also impressed by an incident which Lange related. An hour or so earlier (it was now about 2000) the east platoon under 2d Lt. James W. Leach, had shot up and captured a German kitchen truck which they waylaid at the town square. The truck was carrying hot soup, estimated to be enough to feed at least a company. Major Irzyk, taking this to indicate that the enemy in at least that strength still held the outskirts of town, west and north, figured that the presence of our own troops in the center of town would only obstruct the use of artillery against the Germans.

Major Irzyk therefore gave the order to withdraw from Singling. To cover the withdrawal, Sergeant De Rosia jockeyed his tanks back and forth on the reverse slope of the hill to make the enemy believe that they were entering town. The infantry assembled in about an hour near No. 47 and moved back to the tank positions 400 yards to the south. They dug in and outposted the tanks for the night. During the few hours they had been in Singling they had suffered five light casualties from enemy mortar fire.

Within five minutes of the infantry report that Singling was clear of friendly

troops, corps artillery put a heavy TOT[1] on the town. The next day (7 December) tanks and infantry moved back up to just short of the crest of the Singling ridge, but they were ordered not to advance as they would be relieved momentarily. Relief by units of the 12th Armored Division actually took place that night. Singling was finally taken on 10 December.

The final reckoning of the battle at Singling reveals neither a big action nor a startlingly successful one. All 4th Armored Division units directly involved suffered a total of 22 casualties, of which 6 were killed; they lost 5 medium tanks. Known enemy losses were 2 Mark V tanks and 56 prisoners.

[1] A type of artillery concentration in which the shells from a number of batteries are timed to burst simultaneously on the target. Such a concentration was used for its demoralizing effect on the enemy and also to prevent enemy observation outfits from picking up the location of individual batteries.

SCENE NEAR BINING, *where the Germans blew out a section of road in their retreat. (Photo taken 11 December 1944.)*

The attack on Singling was made against heavy odds, and attended with all the confusion of a hastily improvised maneuver. In itself, the action was a stalemate; nevertheless, it achieved immediate tactical success for Combat Command A. With the main German forces heavily engaged at Singling during the afternoon of 6 December, other elements of Combat Command A were given the opportunity to pass Singling and reach the primary objective, Bining. This was accomplished by the 1st Battalion, 328th Infantry, and Company D (light tanks) of the 37th Tank Battalion. Rohrbach, the further objective, was not entered by Combat Command A.

By probing one of the areas in which the Germans had strongest prepared defenses, the action at Singling opened the way for later advances by the 12th Armored Division.

## *ANNEX: Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| AP | Armor-piercing |
| CP | Command Post |
| HE | High Explosive |
| LCA | Landing Craft, Assault |
| LCVP | Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel |
| LSI | Landing Ship, Infantry |
| NSFC | Naval Shore Fire Control |
| OP | Observation Post |
| SCR 284 | A combined receiver and transmitter for vehicular or ground operations with a range of 10 to 15 miles. This radio set weighs 108 to 110 pounds. |
| SCR 300 | The low power portable radio receiver and transmitter designed for two-way communication over short distances (three miles plus), primarily for foot combat troops. Also called "walkie-talkie." Is adaptable for fixed station use. |
| SCR 536 | A lighter version than SCR 300, designed for similar use. The present models weigh about 5 pounds, as against 32 to 38 for the SCR 300. |
| SOI | Signal Operation Instructions |
| SP | Self-propelled |
| SPM | Self-propelled Mount. An open-topped tracked vehicle mounting either 75-mm or 105-mm howitzers, similar to a tank destroyer. This vehicle was organic equipment of the infantry cannon company. The guns were not placed in turrets; therefore, whenever it became necessary to bring fire to bear on any given target the whole vehicle had to be maneuvered. This vehicle was not armored. The crews had no protection from enemy fire. |



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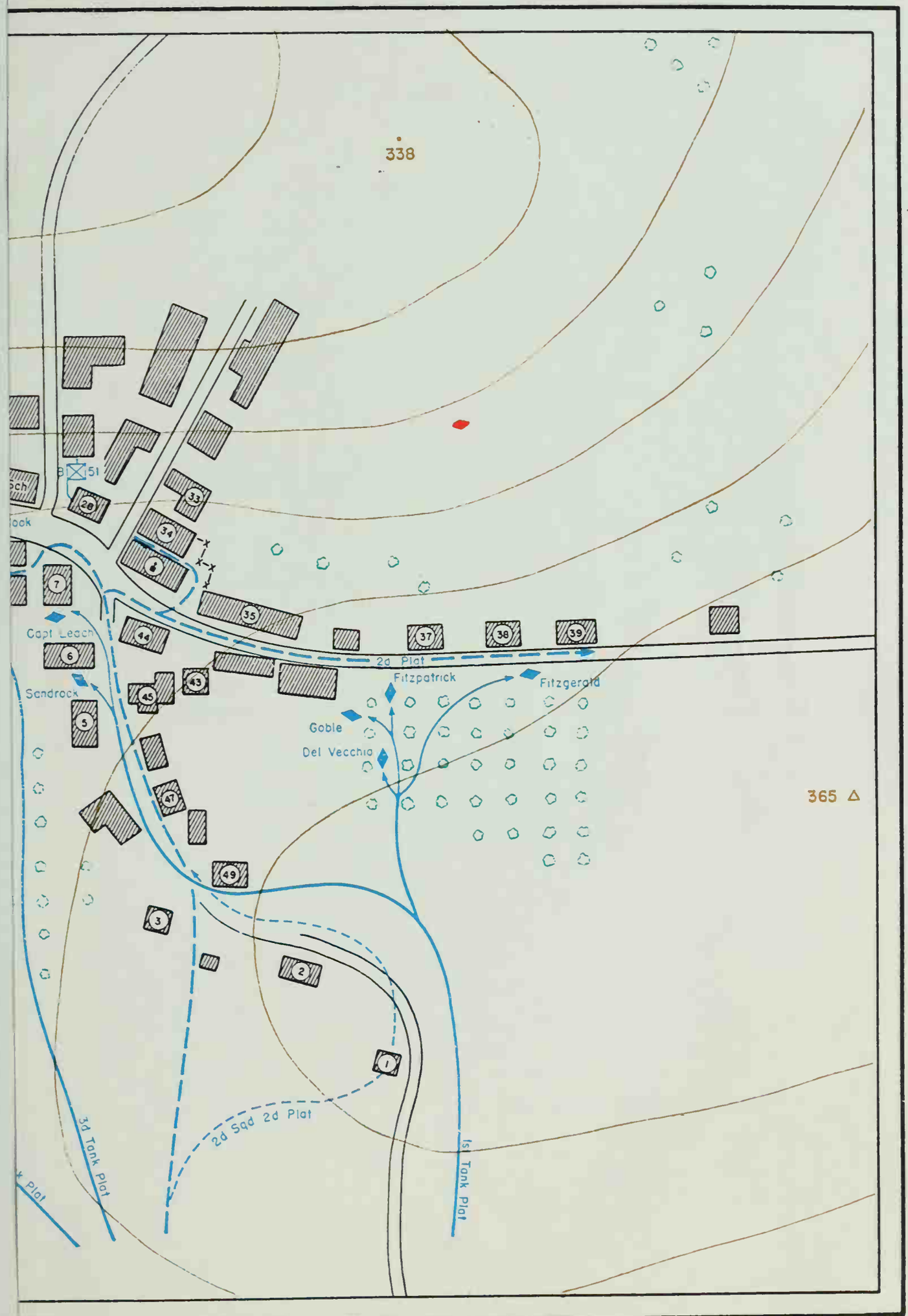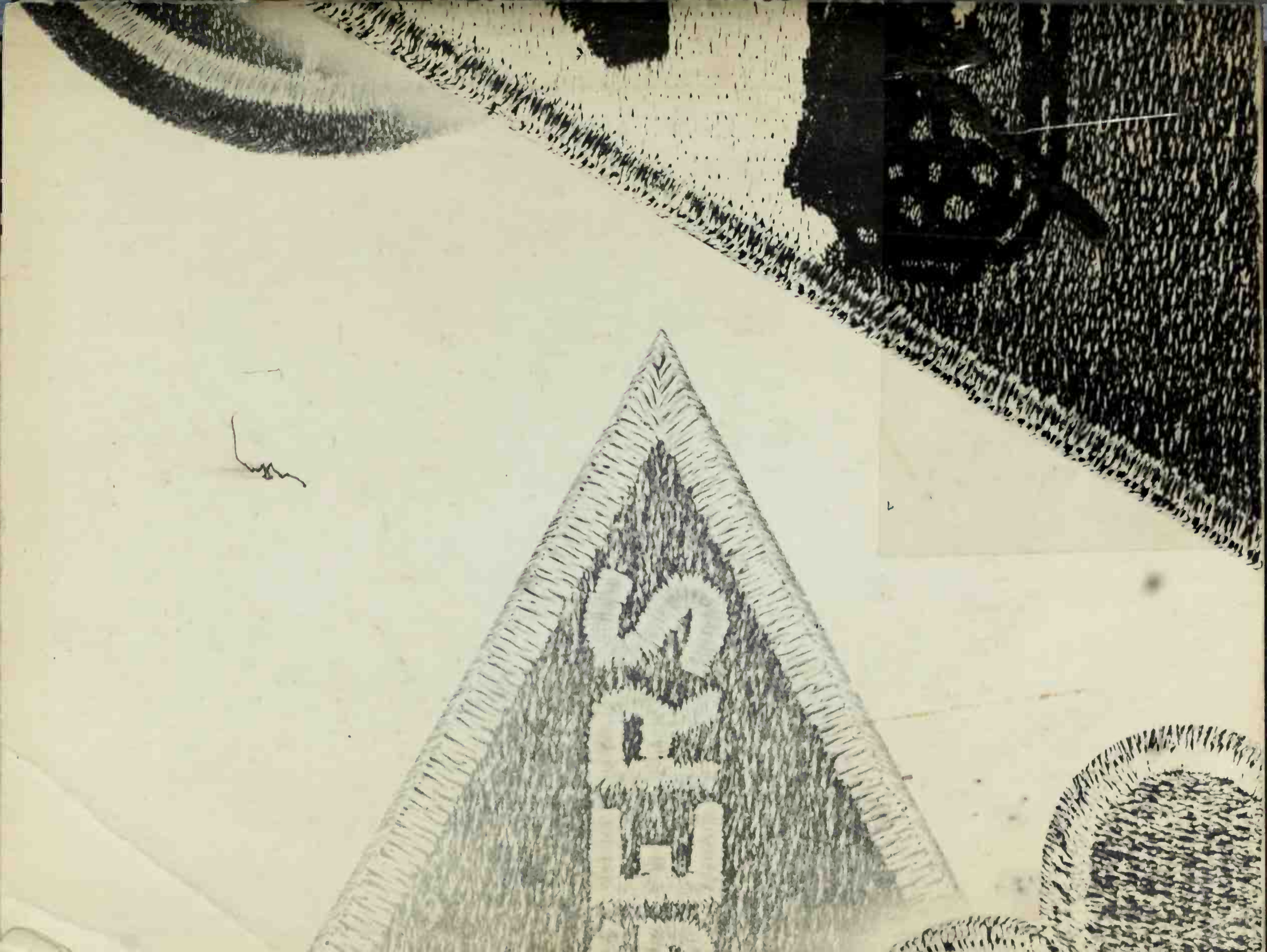
338
365
Capt Leach
Sandrock
Goble
Del Vecchio
Fitzpatrick
Fitzgerald
2d Plat
2d Sqd 2d Plat
3d Tank Plat
1st Tank Plat
51
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